

# TO MEXICO WITH SCOTT

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CAPT. E. KIRBY SMITH  
1807-1847

# TO MEXICO WITH SCOTT

LETTERS OF CAPTAIN E. KIRBY SMITH  
TO HIS WIFE

PREPARED FOR THE PRESS  
BY HIS DAUGHTER

EMMA JEROME BLACKWOOD

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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CAMBRIDGE  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS

LONDON: HUMPHREY MILFORD  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

1917

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JUL 26 1917

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TO MEXICO WITH SCOTT





## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

A BRAVE soldier, ready to lay down his life for his country, should require but little introduction. A man of that stamp is known at sight, is promptly recognized by those among us whose hearts still warm at the record of suffering endured patiently, of duty and discipline enforced at all hazards, of death foreseen and encountered without flinching. He requires no panegyric, no praise; merely a statement of what he did, and where and when. These letters of Ephraim Kirby Smith to his wife tell plainly what sort of man wrote them. The addition of only a few details, of a fact or two to make the setting clearer, is all the reader will require by way of introduction.

He was born on the 17th of June, 1807, at Litchfield, Connecticut, the home of his father and grandfather before him. They were all soldiers, all in the Regular service, all in due course promoted to the rank of Captain. The maternal grandfather, Ephraim Kirby, fought at Bunker Hill, and thereafter through the War of Independence to its close. The father, Joseph Lee Smith, fought in the War of 1812, and won special

<sup>1</sup> The text of Captain Kirby Smith's letters has been prepared for publication by members of his family. Omissions have been made; and these are indicated typographically.

distinction at the battle of Lundy's lane; he eventually rose to the rank of Colonel. His son was destined to pay the battle toll for all three, losing his life in the glorious fight at Molino del Rey under Scott.<sup>1</sup>

Kirby Smith's career in the army was wholly uneventful until the outbreak of the Mexican War. And it is on the 28th of August, 1845, "14 miles from Cincinnati," proceeding with his company of the Fifth Infantry to the border, that his letters to his wife take on added interest from the war conditions. Observant, humane, touched by strange scenery and customs, with some gift of description and an all-pervading honesty, he visibly strove to give her a faithful rendering of all he saw and felt during the momentous experiences that now opened before him. The strange scenery and gorgeous vegetation of Mexico, he tried to convey to her; and ranged in his topics from noting the delicate tint of a meadow flower to criticizing the far from delicate methods of the American Government in handling an international question.

On the march from Jalapa to Puebla, he notes: "The sun unobscured by a cloud rose above the horizon, apparently far below us, his first rays lighting the peak of Orizaba and showing us far in the distance the shining spires and domes of the beautiful city of

<sup>1</sup> His brother Edmund, who also fought through the Mexican campaign, was the well-known Confederate general.

Jalapa. The clouds in many colored, gorgeous piles were resting on the summit of the mountains, while the soft mists were lying in the laps of the hills below, the cultivated valleys showing all their beauties between, while here and there a bold precipice or ragged peak gave sublimity to the scene which was beautiful exceedingly. . . . I know not whether I am more susceptible to the effects of fine scenery than others, but this, which was by far the most glorious picture of nature I have ever beheld, completely overcame me, and I dropped on the earth to breathe a prayer and a thanksgiving to a good God who had made such a glorious world."

It was not often that Captain Kirby Smith could find in Mexico conditions of such unalloyed beauty as to provoke this profound religious emotion. Indeed, this is the only passage in these letters, in which the deepest, most sacred chord of his being is revealed vibrating. At such a moment as that when he saw the sun from behind Jalapa striking Orizaba with its rays, the *tierra templada* might seem an earthly paradise; but other moments, far more numerous, quickly followed, in which the perfection of nature was sharply offset by the imperfection of man. Mexicans black-blooded or Spanish, Indians pure or half-breed, even — with shame be it said — American volunteer troops, might all of them, in their times and places, make Eden itself hideous.

The primitive ways of the native Mexicans, not greatly changed even at this day, sometimes resulted in merely amusing scenes; as, for instance, when the Fifth Infantry camped along the Rio Grande opposite the town of Matamoros: "In the afternoon the habits of these people were curiously displayed. Young women came down to the river side, disrobed without any hesitation, and plunged into the stream, regardless of the numerous spectators on either bank. Some of our young officers were in the water opposite them and soon swam towards them. The Mexican guards were not, however, disposed to let them come much nearer than the middle of the river, so they returned after kissing their hands to the tawny damsels, — which was laughingly returned." Nausicaä and her maidens, all but the color of their skins!

A note less gay is struck when, one night at Puebla, he "was attracted by the sound of music accompanied by a strange kind of wailing which issued from the open door of rather an inferior house. I rode up to it and was much struck by the strange scene. The room was in a blaze of light from many candles. In its centre was a bier on which was extended the corpse of a girl apparently about seventeen, dressed in all the finery the family possessed, with flowers in her bosom, hair, and hands, and surrounded by gilded ornaments, probably borrowed from the churches. In one corner of the room was a group of old women, perfect hags,

squatted round a furnace where a feast was cooking. They looked like so many witches round a cauldron. In the opposite corner was a display of liquors and drinking cups, which the appearance of the inmates proved had not been suffered to stand idle. Immediately round the corpse were several couples dancing a fandango to the merry fiddle, while ever and anon the witches round the cauldron, with their shrill, cracked voices, howled a chant in the Indian-Tlasculan language."

Frequently the volunteers are referred to in these pages, never with commendation, always with an undercurrent of contempt, too frequently with plain horror. With officers not competent even to maintain discipline, let alone handling their men in action, they made of the Stars and Stripes an emblem of pillage, destruction, and outrage. They were "dreaded like death in every village in Mexico." They "fled in every action in which they have been engaged." At Monterey, volunteer regiments bolted. At Buena Vista, it was only the Mexican turning movement that swept many of them back to their stations. General Pillow begged for a single company of regulars at Cerro Gordo, to prevent a whole brigade of volunteers from stampeding.

It was with some gratification, then, that Captain Kirby Smith found himself, at the opening of operations, one of a little force exclusively regulars, under

the command of General Taylor. He reached the camp, at Corpus Christi, on the 8th of September, 1845, and records with evident satisfaction that the little army, about 3,000 men, was the largest regular force assembled by the United States since the War of Independence.

Under Taylor, Kirby Smith fought at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma; but before Buena Vista he went home on leave owing to the death of his father. On rejoining, two months later, he proceeded south to take part in Scott's expedition to Vera Cruz and Mexico City. Of Palo Alto he gives an extended and good description; and his account of the scene at the close is, indeed, quite vivid. "The cannonade continued until night closed in when the spectacle was magnificent. The prairie was burning brilliantly between the two armies and some twenty pieces of artillery thundering from right to left; while through the lurid scene was heard the tramping of horses and the wild cheering of the men."

Transferred to Scott's command, he took part in all the operations from the landing at Vera Cruz to the battle of Churubusco under the walls of Mexico. Cerro Gordo was the only important action he missed. Steadily and well he did his duty, being transferred to a Light Infantry battalion under C. F. Smith. He fought well at Contreras; and at Churubusco, his coolness and courage did much to stiffen the American

line at a very critical moment. But we must leave the reader to find out how, by referring to his own characteristically modest yet clear account of the matter. For this and other services, he knew that reward was due; and he wrongly believed that the coveted brevet was not coming to him for, as a fact, two promotions, to major and to lieutenant-colonel, were awarded him, though too late to reach him. It is not without a touch of envy that he alludes to the brilliant courage of Chaplain McCarty under fire and declares that surely he must be promoted Brevet Bishop!

On the 8th of September, at Molino del Rey, he was acting Lieutenant-Colonel of the Light Infantry battalion. And there, as he mounted the enemy's works, he was shot in the face. He never recovered consciousness, and died three days later. His last words, written to his wife a few hours before the battle, were: "I am thankful that you do not know the peril we are in. Good night!"

One more word may be added, suggested by the events now passing in Mexico. From the day that Kirby Smith fell to the present, Mexico has not changed much nor yet the United States. The problems of those days are much the same as the problems of these. The men have changed and the scale, but not the methods, on either side of the border. Kirby Smith's observations are pregnant with lessons for the American of today; and he saw things larger than the

vices and virtues of the primitive people among whom he went to conquer and to die. He could catch glimpses, illuminating glimpses, of state policies. And as a straightforward soldier his heart sickened when, after every victory won in despite of heavy Mexican odds, in despite of the organized disorganization of his own country, after every victory won the government at Washington sheepishly strove to persuade Santa Anna to give them peace, peace with or without honor, peace so long as it carried with it the coveted Border territory. Their agent Trist, with a bag of three millions of dollars, weighed more at headquarters than Winfield Scott himself.

The unedifying background — cheap politics, unworthy, undisciplined mortals on every side — serves to throw up in the sharpest of contrasts the upright and manly figure of an officer who worthily upheld the high traditions of the regular army of the United States.

R. M. JOHNSTON.



LETTERS OF  
CAPTAIN E. KIRBY SMITH



## LETTERS OF CAPTAIN E. KIRBY SMITH

FOURTEEN MILES FROM CINCINNATI,  
August 28, 1845.<sup>1</sup>

I WRITE before reaching the city, as there I shall be entirely occupied in transporting our baggage to the river, a mile by land from the canal. Our journey has been exceedingly uncomfortable, the heat more oppressive than I ever knew it, and the mosquitoes in swarms at night. Whipple presented himself this morning as completely speckled as a plum pudding, and his face swelled out of all shape from the bites. I escaped this torment by having a mosquito bar, which Dr. Wood kindly lent me from the hospital.

We have been detained two days by a break in the bank of the canal. The General [Brooke], Marcy, and Deas left us yesterday and rode to the city where we shall join them this evening. There are no orders for us at Cincinnati, but the news from Texas is such, that there can be but little doubt that we must be ordered almost immediately to that field. A letter from Lieutenant Beaman at New Orleans states that General Paredes with seven thousand men is only one

<sup>1</sup> Traveling under orders with his company for the front by Ohio Canal.

hundred and twenty miles from General Taylor, who, if this be so, is in a very critical situation. General Gaines has made a requisition on the Governor of Louisiana for one thousand men to reënforce General Taylor if practicable. It seems to me seven years instead of seven days since we parted, so tedious and lonely has been this canal route, though, for the last three days, passing through the finest country I have ever beheld.

P. S. On board transport "Plymouth" eleven o'clock at night.

I am almost tired out, have been on my feet in the hot sun on the rough pavements for eight hours, getting my command embarked, but cannot go to bed until I close my sheet to you. On our arrival at two o'clock today we found an order for the battalion to proceed immediately to Corpus Christi, under my command. We shall probably reach Texas in about twelve days. Our companies are strengthened by fifty recruits from the rendezvous here. I shall have a very pretty command for a captain, and if there is anything to be done, I think I shall have a chance.

NEW ORLEANS,  
September 9, 1845.

We left Cincinnati on the twenty-ninth ultimo, having been strengthened by fifty recruits from the depot at Newport. We were exceedingly fortunate

in getting down the river (Ohio) without accident, the water being very low; reached Cairo Monday afternoon the first, and were there employed until three o'clock Tuesday morning in unloading and reloading a large down-river boat "Metamora" with our baggage. Finally, after a most dreadful night of heat, stench, and confusion, we were prepared to commence our voyage. We parted with General Brooke at this point. Poor old man! he was sad enough. We gave him three hearty cheers as his boat parted from ours. He waved his cap in farewell, but seemed unable to speak, and turned immediately into his state-room.

The Lower Mississippi retains very much the character of the Upper; the water is, however, muddy, and the banks below Natchez leveed and thickly sprinkled with plantations. As you approach New Orleans they are continuous. We could see the tops of the sugar cane waving in the breeze for many miles. We arrived at the city about three o'clock on the seventh, an intensely hot day.

Marcy,<sup>1</sup> the acting Assistant Quarter-Master, was quite sick, threatened with fever, and could not go on shore, so I was compelled to do his duty besides my own. However, in two hours I had completed my business with the Department Quarter-Master General and came down to the barracks three miles below the

<sup>1</sup> Randolph B. Marcy, Fifth Infantry.

town, and we were landed and in quarters by eight in the evening. This post is by far the most beautiful I have ever seen. The quarters are fine and airy, completely protected from the sun by beautiful tropical shade trees, with extensive yards and gardens about them, and a large shaded parade ground clothed with a rich greensward.

I have arranged my transportation, and we shall leave in the steamship "Alabama" for Corpus Christi, tomorrow morning.

Corpus Christi is represented by every one as the most delightful spot on the globe, cool, healthy, no insects, not a mosquito, an abundance of oysters, fish, and venison, but unfortunately no wood to cook with. We shall, barring accident, or Mexican privateers, reach there by the fourteenth. General Taylor has now in his camp near three thousand regular troops, and a considerable body of volunteers. He will soon have five thousand regulars and will, it is thought, be amply strong for any force the Mexicans can send against him. We leave most of our baggage here, going into the field light and ready for active service. Mrs. Kelly (wife of a soldier) is cooking and washing for Rossell and myself, and we expect to get on with great economy. No sickness in New Orleans, not a case of yellow fever. My own health was never better. I have gained every hour since I started.

CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS (OR MEXICO),  
ARMY OF OCCUPATION,  
September 18, 1845.

I wrote you at New Orleans that we should reach Aransas on the fourteenth — we were there on the morning of the thirteenth, having had a most delightful run of only sixty hours from the city. The first night we were on the Gulf I was informed that Mrs. Roth (a camp woman of my company) was sick. Poor thing ! I gave her my stateroom, and by morning she was delivered of a son. This was the second birth on the route. The mothers are now both well, and doing their regular washing for the men. . . . The “Alabama,” in which we crossed the Gulf, is a large steamship of too much draught to enter the Bay, and we were compelled to disembark on steam lighters in the open roadstead, where there is always a heavy sea, a dangerous and disagreeable duty. Thompson lost his tents in its performance; the tierce containing them being washed overboard, a most serious loss, depriving his company of the only shelter his men and women have, compelling the rest to divide with him and crowding all.

On the next day we were all prepared on two small steamboats and got under way for this point about thirty miles from St. Joseph’s Island. On the route we passed the wreck of the “Dayton,” a boat which was blown up on the thirteenth. The explosion instantly

killed two officers, Lieutenants Higgins and Berry, of the Fourth Infantry, a sergeant, and five men. Some others have since died of their wounds. Captain Crossman and Lieutenant Gordon were thrown some fifty or sixty yards from the boat, but, incredible as it may appear, were not seriously injured. The melancholy of this terrible accident was much heightened by the fact that Lieutenant Higgins had been married, but a few days before being ordered here, to the daughter of Captain Morrison of the Third Infantry.

At night, the fourteenth, during a violent thunder storm, we cast anchor opposite to the camp fires of the Army of Occupation. They extended along the beach, apparently for more than a mile, on the south of the Nueces River, consequently in the *disputed territory*. Amid the gloom and rain I stumbled along the shore, seeking for headquarters to make my report, greeted frequently, as I passed the camp, by cordial welcomes from the well-known voices of old companions, whom I had not met for years. In the morning we landed and commenced our encampment, a most arduous undertaking, having to cut off a dense thicket which covered the whole ground infested with rattle snakes and insects. By night we were all in our canvas houses, though there were frequent snake alarms during the whole night. The climate here is perfectly delicious and healthy; no possibility of sickness, and



so cool from the trade wind, which blows steadily, that our cloth clothing is very comfortable. All prospect of meeting with the Mexican forces has vanished, and the supposition now is that we shall remain in this neighborhood, perhaps march to the Rio Grande, until all difficulty is settled by negotiation between the two governments.

There is at the southern extremity of the camp, about three-fourths of a mile from our position, a settlement called a ranch. It is, in fact, a Mexican trading place. There are some dozen houses, most of them stores. Here the Mexicans from Matamoras and other places come constantly. They more resemble negroes than whites. I have as yet hardly had time to observe anything. I haven't even been on the hill back of us, but understand that the country is one vast prairie covered with droves of mustangs. We have fine fish in abundance, but in every other particular depend upon the commissary, "pork and beans being the chief of our diet."

I wish you could take a look at us. On the right are the Second Dragoons, on the left a corps of artillery volunteers from New Orleans. The camp covers the ground for more than a mile, as near in a line as the shore will permit, and when the residue of the troops ordered here have arrived will be the largest body of regulars, it is said, which has been assembled since the Revolution. . . .

CORPUS CHRISTI,  
November 2, 1845.

We hear nothing here about our movements, but are lying under our canvas on the shelly beach of this calm sea in a perfect state of monotony. We all go to bed at tattoo; there is no frolicking and no card playing that I know of in the camp. I have almost forgotten how to smoke, and certainly shall if we live in this way long. The great change of climate and the bad brackish water we are compelled to drink has made most of our regiment (the Fifth) sick. None of the cases are, however, very severe and all are now recovering.<sup>1</sup> We have had some severe northers since I wrote last, accompanied by rain. They are terrible visitations to an encampment, sweeping everything before them by their violence and with their icy breath freezing our very vitals. I slept in a wet bed two nights, and only kept alive by having a large camp kettle of coals by my side. As soon as the wind changes to the south, from which quarter it blows almost constantly, the weather becomes as warm as with you in midsummer. . . . General Taylor is sending out exploring parties in various directions. The last which started for the Rio Grande a few days since was compelled to return, by the rains and floods which rendered the streams impassable. An expedition has gone by water to examine the harbor of

<sup>1</sup> November 20.

Brasos Santiago and the mouth of the Rio Grande. All these explorations are to acquire knowledge upon which to locate the permanent posts. There is a report here this morning of a rupture with the Comanches. It is said that some of them have been killed as well as two citizens near Bexar, and that the Dragoons are in some way mixed up with the affair. These Indians are a much more formidable enemy than the Mexicans, and if this report be true we may have a stiff fight out of them. . . .

*December 28.* I told you in my last that I was going up the Nueces River. Major Sibley, a citizen, and myself, with a crew of soldiers, left camp before light on Wednesday, December 12. We crossed in our boat over Corpus Christi Bay to the mouth of the river about eight miles; ascended it eighteen miles and encamped. The river Nueces very much resembles the Fox above Lake Winnebago, though there's an occasional strip of stunted timber on the bank, shutting out from view the boundless prairie beyond. The prairies here are never broken by anything resembling the beautiful "oak openings" of the North, but in all directions may be seen in the dim distance clumps of trees and bushes seldom covering over a quarter acre, which are called in the vernacular "mots." The deer on these prairies are innumerable, large herds of them to be seen in every direction, and many persons have said they had seen more than ten

thousand in one day. From my own observation I think they did not exaggerate, for in one day while I was up the river, by no means in the best game country, I saw more deer than I supposed existed in all America. We were joined at our encampment by Merrill, who came riding up to us with a deer hanging on each side of his horse. He had crossed the country to where we were about eighteen miles from Corpus Christi, killing the deer on the way. Merrill, the citizen, and I hunted the next day while the Major ascended the river in the boat. The proceeds of our hunt were two more deer and twelve turkeys. Next day the weather being threatening we returned to camp just in time to escape a regular tempest. I was much disappointed in the character of the country as far as my observation extended. In this region the soil is sandy, unproductive, and unfit for agriculture but admirably suited for grazing. The short sweet muskeet grass is good the whole year, making as fine beef as does grain, the cattle always keeping fat upon it. The water in the streams is soft and wholesome. It was a real treat to us, a regular cold water spree after the brackish, filthy water we had been drinking on the coast.

DEPARTMENT TAMANLIPAS, TEXAS,  
FILISOLAS WELLS,

March 17, 1846.

We, the Second Brigade, left Corpus Christi at eight in the morning on the tenth. We parted with

our old camping ground without regret, and cheerfully commenced our march over the hill. Our course was a little north of west, over a prairie sprinkled with "mots" (Mexican vernacular) of stunted timber, muskeet, a species of locust, and extensive fields of chaparral, dense thorny thickets, perfectly impenetrable. After marching about eight miles the Nueces was seen on our right, winding through the prairie like a blue ribbon carelessly thrown on a green robe. The prairie was covered with flowers such as bloom at the North during the summer. I observed in great abundance the spiderwort, phlox, lupin, fireplant lobelia inflata, primrose, etc., indeed, most of the common flowers of the Northern prairies. The day was hot though cloudy with a pleasant breeze. Our weather would be like the July of your region, were we not relieved of its sultriness by the tail of the south-east trade, which blows upon us steadily at this season. We made twelve miles and encamped on the right bank of the Nueces about four o'clock. Among the flowers I ought to mention the Spanish bayonet now in full bloom. The plant towers to a gigantic size, the shaft or body like the palmetto running up some ten or fifteen feet, from six to ten inches in diameter, crowded with a cluster of glossy green bayonets radiating in every direction from the centre of which, and towering several feet above all, is a glorious pyramid of white flowers hanging in clusters or lateral branches

from the main stem. These are visible for many miles on the open prairie, and appear precisely like ships in the distance, or when near a mot like a tall lighthouse on some wooded headland. I was on guard last evening and sat up nearly all night. About daylight it began to rain. We broke up our camp at sunrise and were en route by seven. After marching two hours west our course turned to the southwest, to avoid marshes about the head waters of streams emptying into the Gulf. We marched for miles over a muddy prairie almost impassable for our baggage train. I had command of the advance guard and saw much game, deer innumerable, geese, ducks, curlew, cranes, wild turkeys, etc. Made fourteen miles and encamped at Agua Dulce (sweet water). It was a very fatiguing day to the command, and the baggage train was not all up until night, though we were in camp at five o'clock. Here an express was received from General Worth, who had left Corpus Christi one day in advance of us, stating that he was but four miles away, and that we would have much difficulty in crossing the marshes next day. Our camp was delightfully situated on a gentle slope towards the water, the evening was pleasant, the moon at full. I took a refreshing bath and felt as good as new. Our camp was, however, full of "varmints." From one hole a rabbit, a rat, a rattle snake, and a tarantula were dislodged, these animals, incredible as it may appear, living in com-

mon in the same den. I killed with my sword, immediately in rear of my tent, a huge rattler nearly six feet in length. We proceeded on our weary march at seven in the morning. It rained until eleven o'clock, after which the weather was fine and cool. After passing the camp of the First Brigade, the road was good, and all proceeded smoothly. After marching eleven miles, we encamped seven miles from the depot on the San Gertrude.

The country we passed over was diversified with rich prairies, scattered wood, and chaparral and we saw a fine herd of antelopes and several droves of wild horses. On the eighteenth broke up our camp and marched at half-past six. The weather was exceedingly warm, and many of the officers and men suffered much from blistered feet. Passed the San Gertrude and depot at eleven o'clock and encamped two miles beyond on a beautiful ground with good wood and water. General Taylor and staff overtook us at this place, but soon pushed on after the Dragoons who were some twenty miles in advance. We renewed the supplies of provisions and marched on the morning of the fourteenth at seven. The day was oppressively hot, and I found I was doomed to suffer as I discovered I was badly poisoned. You know well with what severity it attacks me and how painful it is. Now imagine me marching in the midst of the dust of the army, toiling on for miles without water, under a

fierce tropical sun, and you may have some idea what I encountered this day. But all things have an end and we pitched our tents at last near an extensive growth of stunted timber, live oaks, acacia in full bloom, and muskeet.

The place is called by the Mexicans San Fernando. I took a bath and sat down to encounter my torments in sulky silence. This afternoon Mason caught a young antelope. How beautiful he was ! His large, mild eye was fixed upon us with the most beseeching expression. I pleaded for him and Mason had him restored to liberty near where he was taken. The weary afternoon wore away and I went to my blanket, but not to sleep. It seemed to me an eternity to reveille, but it and "the general" finally beat and we resumed our route which lay over a barren, sandy region. The day was hot, the poison much worse, my forehead, chin, wrists, and breasts being ulcerated and much swollen. We reached our camping ground about two, but marched and counter-marched in the burning sun for more than an hour before the Colonel had sufficiently collected his ideas to suffer us to pitch our tents. Several peccaries were killed near the camp and large droves of them seen. They are a fierce animal and bear about the same resemblance to a hog that the buffalo does to a common ox. I spent another night of suffering without one wink of sleep, and nearer dead than alive, with a feeling of perfect desperation



I prepared to head my company. We began our march at half-past five, and as we moved off Major Stanford's servant was sent to me with one of the Major's horses. I shall never cease to be grateful to him, as I was truly unfit to march. Our route today was over a sandy desert and was very hard upon the men. The ox-teams were not able to keep up. We made a little over fifteen miles, and encamped at a place called Filisola's Wells. Filisola was one of Santa Anna's generals, and commanded the rear division at the battle of San Jacinto. He retreated after that battle and 'tis said rested his army some days at this place.

An express came to us here from General Taylor announcing "The enemy is on our front, threatening to attack us if we advance." The rear brigades were ordered to push on with as much dispatch as possible and join the advance of the army. We were all much excited and forgot our fatigues and sufferings and discussed our prospects around our camp fires. The enemy were reported to be four thousand, we were but three thousand, yet should we meet them we felt the utmost confidence that we should beat them. I got some sleep this night and rose much refreshed at two in the morning when our reveille sounded. We were off at four o'clock, I being still mounted on the Major's horse.

We made this day a long march over a perfect desert, the scanty herbage having been burnt by the enemy.

The only water we saw was salt and the sun streamed upon us like living fire. We were all day enveloped in clouds of black sooty dust and ashes, which adhered to our beards and skins moist with perspiration making us look like so many dirty negroes, and when late in the afternoon we halted at a muddy pool of brackish water, our very wives would not have known us ! We made today between seventeen and eighteen miles all much fatigued, but after washing and getting a cup of tea our cheerfulness was restored. The sixteenth we started at seven in the morning, the rear of our baggage train with the rear guard still many miles behind. The soil and country today rapidly improved and we encamped early on a rich prairie, surrounded by pleasant woods. Directly in front of our camp was a pond of clear sweet water. Oh ! how we did drink and bathe ! I never knew before how good water could be after being without it thirty-six hours. We saw many wild bulls, and a magnificent mustang attracted by our horses ventured up to the very chain of sentinels. He was glossy black with fine muscular proportions, and looked worthy to bear a hero through a battle charge, as he stood with expanded nostrils and dilating eye gazing upon the strange sight before him. An effort was made to take him with the lasso, but he distanced our fleetest horses and returned again and again to gaze upon the strange array which had invaded his native wilds.

I mounted guard with two subalterns and eighty men. The guard tents being still in the rear we bivouacked in front of the camp. On the nineteenth we made eleven miles through a fine country, no want of water and plenty of game. We heard the drums of the First Brigade at tattoo and had a most interesting dispatch from General Taylor stating that the enemy were in force at the crossing of the Arroyo Colorado seven miles ahead, and that he should force the ford as soon as we came up. All our teams reached us in the night and we started at seven in the morning.

At eight we came up with the baggage train of the First Brigade which was parked and guarded to await the termination of the expected battle. At a quarter past nine we deployed on the right of the First Brigade in order of battle, immediately on the bank of the Arroyo Colorado. For the last two miles before we reached the river we met staff officers, men and camp followers riding to the rear, all with eager, anxious faces, all telling the same tale, that the Mexicans were in force on the opposite bank. As we deployed we saw a few Mexican ranchereros (militia) and lancers in the edge of the bushes on the other side. We heard, too, from the staff officers that the Mexican Adjutant-General and a Colonel Kintaro had been with General Taylor and had pledged their honor as soldiers that they would fire upon the first man of our army who should attempt to cross the ford, that

such were the orders from General Mejia and that they were supported by a strong force. They were fully believed as bugles were sounding the advance in various directions on their side, and troops and horsemen were showing themselves at many points on the bank as if parts of a strong body deployed in order of battle. General Taylor had replied to the Mexican officers that in fifteen minutes he should force the passage and that his batteries would open on any one who should oppose themselves to it. Then, immediately ordering his horse, the Mexican officers retired. This was perhaps one of the most exciting hours of my life. All, from the General-in-Chief to the smallest drummer boy, felt morally certain that we were on the verge of a fierce and bloody conflict, yet I saw no one who was not cheerful and apparently eager for the game to begin.

The river at the ford is about eighty yards in width, and four feet in depth. The banks, I judged, about fifteen feet in height, the crest on the Mexican side covered with wood and a thick undergrowth, on ours, an open field with a wood in our rear. The movement was begun at half-past ten, by four companies of the Second Brigade under the command of Captain C. F. Smith, who by the right flank and in perfect order marched into the water. As they struck the margin, General Worth rushed to the head of the column to lead the charge. We watched them in breathless

silence as they deepened in the water expecting that at every step they would receive a withering fire. When they were half way over and not a shot fired the disappointment of the men was shown from right to left in muttered curses. A squadron of Dragoons followed immediately in rear of Captain C. F. Smith's command and the entire army marched over rapidly, reaching the opposite bank in thirty minutes from the order to move. As the head of the column reached the shore, the men with cheers formed in order of battle, the music struck up "Yankee Doodle," and we all marched rapidly up the hill. A few Mexicans were seen retreating, and the great battle of Arroyo Colorado was terminated !

The Mexican threats were all gasconade intended to intimidate General Taylor and delay our advance upon Matamoras. We encamped about three miles from the river to await the arrival of our baggage train and the Third Brigade which was still a day's march in the rear. If you consider the tale "all cry and no wool," I can only say it was interesting to us although the yellow gentlemen completely pulled the wool over our eyes. The Third Brigade came up about three o'clock in the afternoon and we waited another day for the train to arrive.

On the twenty-third at sunrise we broke up our camp and moved in four columns in the direction of Matamoras, twenty-eight miles distant. The day

was oppressively hot, our march rapid, and I had not been so much exhausted at any time as when a short halt was called a little after noon by the side of a muddy pond. We presented today an imposing spectacle as we moved in parallel columns across the open prairie, with our long baggage train close in our rear and our scouts far in advance and on our flanks examining every thicket. A thousand rumors were in the mouths of our newsmongers, of forces in our front ready to eat us without pepper or salt. We made twelve miles and encamped just before sunset in a deep ravine which in high water is one of the outlets of the Rio Grande. The country was beautiful during the whole day, the ground clothed with flowers which at the North are rare exotics. Many varieties of cactus were budding and blossoming around us, from the giant prickly pear to a diminutive little fellow just poking his thorny nose through the soil crowned with a brilliant blossom. I know the names of but few of this numerous family. The Turk's head is perhaps the most beautiful we have seen, presenting a semi-sphere only above the ground the size of a tolerably large watermelon while on the apex is a crown of brilliant feather-petalled blossoms.

On the twenty-fourth we moved in the same order as on the previous day until we crossed the road from Matamoras to Point Isabel, at a place as we supposed about nine miles from the Point and eighteen from

the city. Here General Taylor with the Dragoons and a battery of artillery left us for Point Isabel where he expected to find our munitions, etc., with a few siege pieces and mortars expected by water. General Worth moved the three brigades five miles towards Matamoras and encamped.

RIO GRANDE, OPPOSITE MATAMORAS,  
March 29, 1846.

On the twenty-sixth we advanced our camp three miles where we awaited General Taylor's return. He arrived on the evening of the twenty-seventh and on the twenty-eighth we moved off in our usual order but soon came into defiles through dense chaparral compelling us to march in single column. About half-past nine in the morning, we saw the first habitation since leaving Corpus Christi, and were soon marching between cultivated fields enclosed in high hedges cutting off all view of the country, save the thatched roofs of the cottages. At half-past ten we were marching upon the bank of the Rio Grande immediately in front and in full view of Matamoras, our colors flying and music playing. The Mexican flag was waving from various points over the city, sentinels posted on the opposite bank and a few men and women walking about carelessly. Most of the inhabitants have left this side, and all communication is cut off as they have taken all the boats over to their

side. The authorities appeared very sulky neither fighting nor shaking hands. The river is a rapid stream two hundred yards wide, deep, and enclosed with perpendicular banks about twenty feet in height. After our camp was pitched I wandered down the bank among many others gazing at the fortifications and troops of the Mexicans. Their cavalry and infantry were moving about establishing pickets and guards in various directions along the bank.

General Worth and staff, after much difficulty, induced them to send over a boat to receive him with a flag. He crossed to their shore but General Mejia (pronounced Mahea) refused to receive any one but General Taylor. General Vegas, however, finally came to the shore and told General Worth, in amount, that they considered war begun by our invasion and they could hold no intercourse with us.

In the afternoon, the habits of these people were curiously displayed. Young women came down to the river side, disrobed without any hesitation, and plunged into the stream, regardless of the numerous spectators on either bank. Some of our young officers were in the water opposite them and soon swam towards them. The Mexican guards were not, however, disposed to let them come much nearer than the middle of the river, so they returned after kissing their hands to the tawny damsels which was laughingly returned.



This morning we found the enemy had been busy during the night erecting breastworks and planting cannon opposite to us. What will be the result of all this I can only conjecture. We certainly ought not with so small a force be left here to face the whole Mexican nation. General Ampudia with more than three thousand veterans will, it is said, in a few days reach Matamoras. This is a sort of journal written under all sorts of disadvantages from time to time when I have been tired and weary. Many incidents of interest have been passed over, they will be subjects of conversation for us at some future day. . . .

CAMP NEAR MATAMORAS,  
April 9, 1846.

We have been as busy as a light infantry company on drill ever since we arrived eleven days ago. Such a night as last night I have never known in all my soldiering. We were at tea in my mess tent just before sunset when suddenly one of our furious tropical storms struck us perfectly unexpectedly. I ran, leaving my mess mates laughing at my haste. In a moment more, however, their tent was prostrated over their heads, the dishes, tea, sugar, etc., with all the sundries of the mess chest which was open, the lid serving for a table, in one amorphous mass under a perfect deluge of rain. In the meantime, I had reached my tent which unaided I was endeavoring to secure. I

had barely time to roll my bed in an oil cloth, when the tent pins on the windward side began to yield, the rain driving in upon me in torrents. Edmund<sup>1</sup> at this moment arrived from under the mess tent and with the assistance of a few men we managed to secure our frail house. We had just moved our camp into a corn field newly ploughed, the soil an adhesive clay, and by the time I had in some measure secured my baggage — which old soldierlike, I first attended to — the water was some inches deep, or rather there was a soft adhesive mortar bed, about ankle deep, over the whole camp. The rain and gale were still at their worst, when I began looking about to see “the state of the nation.” In every direction the tents were overthrown and their contents scattered in the mud. My own company had almost entirely disappeared, a few despairing wretches, groping about in the mud for their arms, were all that were left. The fires were extinguished and desolation reigned throughout the camp. In an hour or two the storm somewhat abated, fires were rekindled and efforts made to repair damages, but to little purpose. The arms were put in forming order and the men sat or stood about in miserable groups, without any possibility of sleeping, and at reveille this morning our whole brigade was marched to the works, it being our detail on a large

<sup>1</sup> His brother, afterwards in the Civil War the Confederate General, Edmund Kirby Smith.

fortification, which we are constructing as rapidly as possible. . . . We are here neither in a state of peace nor war. Our pickets and patrols have exchanged some shots, and several deserters have been killed in endeavoring to cross the river. The Mexican authorities have shot or hung one of our Dragoons as a spy. He was in truth a deserter and was executed in retaliation for one of their soldiers, who, they say, was shot by one of our patrols. This needs confirmation. We contend with one annoyance that is almost insupportable. We are completely overrun with wood ticks. I am sure I pull out of my flesh on an average fifty per day. They annoy some persons but slightly, me, they poison wherever they bite. My person looks as if I had the confluent smallpox. Here is tattoo. . . .

*April 19.* The aspect of Mexican and Oregon affairs changes more frequently than the moon. Perhaps one of them depends upon the other. If England and Uncle Sam settle the Oregon question, Mexico may be more readily induced to treat on the subject of Texas; but if John Bull and Brother Jonathan get by the ears, our yellow neighbors aided and sustained by English guineas will probably persist until, as they boast, their eagles are planted on the Sabine. . . .

Since I wrote last, matters have had a serious war-like tendency. General Ampudia who relieved General

Mejia in command at Matamoras has sent a dispatch to General Taylor, requiring him to retreat in twenty-four hours, and adding that his refusal to do so would be considered a declaration of war. This, of course, was not acceded to by General Taylor, who replied that he had been sent here by his Government and should remain; that if Ampudia chose to attack him, the consequences must rest on his own head and upon the Mexican nation. The next day, it is said, a courier arrived with orders superseding General Ampudia, and placing General Arista in command of the Northern army. So that General Ampudia has retired in disgust.

On the tenth Colonel Truman Cross, Department Quarter-Master General, left camp unattended, for a ride. He was seen in the course of the morning about three miles up the river, but has not since been heard from. Every effort has been made to ascertain his fate, but as yet we have not discovered the slightest clue to it. It was hoped for some days that he was a prisoner at Matamoras, but we now know he is not there. He has undoubtedly been killed, the first victim of annexation. This melancholy event has cast a gloom over the whole camp. Lieutenant Deas swam the river a few days since and is now a prisoner.

We are very strongly posted here though still in a ploughed field and extremely dirty and uncomfortable. The camp is very healthy, not a man in the whole

army has died since we left Corpus Christi. . . .

*April 22.* Colonel Cross's remains have been found and were brought to camp last evening. He was murdered by banditti.

CAMP NEAR MATAMORAS,  
April 28, 1846.

Since my last letter we have had busy and exciting times. I have already mentioned that on the nineteenth Lieutenant T. Porter with one private of the Fourth Infantry were killed. On the twenty-fifth Colonel Cross's remains were buried at the foot of our flagstaff. His son intends removing his body to Washington. On the twenty-fourth information had been received from our spies that the enemy were crossing the river some miles below us fifteen hundred strong, and also twenty-eight miles above with a force of twenty-five hundred.

A squadron of Dragoons was sent down the river to ascertain the truth of the report in that direction, but returned next day finding no enemy. At the same time two troops under command of Captain Thornton were sent up the river. They were composed of Captains Thornton and Hardee, Lieutenants Mason and Kane, with fifty-two enlisted men, well mounted, well equipped, as gallant a little band as ever struck a blow. On the morning of the twenty-sixth their guide, a Mexican, returned and stated that he had left them twenty miles above having learned that the

enemy were in force near them. Shortly after he parted from them, he heard many volleys of musketry, and abandoning his horse he secreted himself in the chaparral where he remained concealed all day. Two mounted Mexicans passed his position, examining the houses and the shrubbery, evidently in search of him. He kept quiet until night when he came to camp as fast as possible to make his report. His conclusion was, that the whole party were killed to a man. Everyone at first discredited him entirely, but as hours rolled by and none of the band appeared his sad tale gained credence. At one in the afternoon, as we were going to the trenches to work, the whole army working by six-hour reliefs, we met a Mexican cart bringing in a wounded Dragoon, sent by the Mexican General Torrejou from motives of humanity, with a note to General Taylor stating that he had no flying hospital, and confirming in part the report of the guide, but rendering it a little less horrible by stating that all were not killed, some of them having been captured, who, he said, would receive the treatment due to prisoners of war.

In the course of the afternoon a parley was sounded from the other side, and a boat crossed bringing over another wounded Dragoon and an official report from Captain Hardee. He states in substance that in obedience to orders Captain Thornton proceeded up the river fifteen miles on the night of the twenty-

fourth, and started again at the dawn of the next day. The guide being convinced that the Mexicans were near, in force, refused to go any farther, in which he was justifiable, as his life would be the certain forfeit if he were taken. Captain Thornton was, however, unconvinced of the presence of a foe, and determined to proceed. In a short time they came to a large farm with some houses at the upper end, the whole surrounded by a dense chaparral hedge. They rode into this field, single file, by a pair of bars which were about two hundred yards from the houses, Captain Thornton in advance, and Captain Hardee in the rear. The men immediately scattered among the houses, many dismounting seeking some one to question. No guard was left at the entrance. While in this situation the alarm was given the Mexicans were upon them. An order to retreat was promptly given, but too late. On reaching the pass, it was found closed and covered by a heavy body of infantry. They were nearly surrounded, the Mexicans firing upon them from three directions, the river side alone being open. They, however, remained undaunted and rode down by the fence to the right. At this time Captain Hardee said to Captain Thornton, "Our only chance is to tear down the fence and cut our way to the rear." Thornton assented, but his horse, a noble, powerful roan, became ungovernable and ran off with him, followed by many of the men. The last that was seen of Thornton, his

horse by a desperate and extraordinary leap was clearing the fence. Captain Hardee immediately rallied the residue of the troops and pushed for the river, intending to swim it and go down on the other side. This was found impracticable, the bank being extremely boggy. Hardee then counted his men — twenty-five besides Lieutenant Kane and himself, some of whom were wounded, and all having lost either a sabre, a pistol, or a carbine — and formed them in order of battle, all resolutely determined to sell their lives as dearly as possible if they could not obtain honorable terms. Hardee advanced by himself and was met by a Mexican officer, with whom favorable terms were arranged, and they at once laid down their arms. When all the prisoners were collected they numbered forty-five, six of whom were wounded. Seven of our men were killed, and Captain Thornton and Lieutenant Mason were missing, presumed dead.

The prisoners were all marched to Matamoras and paraded in triumph. The conditions of the surrender were complied with, — the officers receiving half-pay and civil treatment and the men rations or twenty-five cents per day. This morning another message was received from Matamoras with letters from Thornton, alive after all, in which he stated that he was finally taken, by his horse falling and rendering him insensible. The Mexican, Colonel Torrejou, who



is a native of Pensacola, says Thornton most gallantly cut his way through their infantry and cavalry and went off apparently unhurt though closely pursued, and that he was within five or six miles of our camp when his roan leaped or fell over a precipice leaving Thornton insensible, in which situation he was taken prisoner. Our men, of course, are not allowed to make any definite statements concerning the Mexican force or losses, their communications being open and passing through the hands of the commanding officer. Thus far our little parties have been most unfortunate. We hope, however, in a few days in a pitched battle to satisfy these gentlemen that it is necessary for them to keep to their own side of the river, and even then we shall not let them remain long unmolested. We are only waiting to finish the fort, so as to secure our position, when we shall be at them let their numbers be what they may. For many days we have had constant information that their forces were increasing by large accessions from the interior, while ours have been decreasing by numerous discharges and from other causes. Unless they felt they were strong they would not dare be in our rear, as it is to be believed they are. At all events, our communication is almost if not entirely cut off with Point Isabel, to which place we must and will fight our way.

POINT ISABEL,  
May 3, 1846.

Day before yesterday we left our fort in command of Major Brown and garrisoned by the Seventh Infantry and two companies of artillery with eight pieces. We started at three in the afternoon and marched eight miles through the chaparral by sunset and arrived here, thirty miles, after a terrible forced march, before noon yesterday. Before reveille this morning we heard the guns from our fort near Matamoras, which has undoubtedly been attacked. It is now ten in the morning and we still hear the cannon. What will be the result no one can conjecture, for in truth we know little in regard to the forces of the enemy, their numbers being variously reported from five to fifteen thousand. Probably it does not exceed six thousand. We are to march from here at one o'clock today to the rescue, as we suppose, of our little command before Matamoras. We are about two thousand strong and may be interrupted in our march.

POINT ISABEL,  
May 7, 1846.

I have only time to write a line to say that as yet all is well. We have heard from our fort. Captain Walker, a gallant fellow, commanding a few Texan rangers, left there on the night of the fourth and succeeded in reaching here with dispatches from Major

Brown. At that time the enemy had fired near fifteen hundred balls and shells at the work, without producing the least effect, and our eighteen-pounders had silenced most of their batteries. The enemy's shot are all made of copper, so you see we have the copper rage here as well as at the North. But one man had been killed in the fort, a sergeant of the Seventh, by the bursting of a shell. This afternoon we start back with the wagon train, but it is thought doubtful whether the enemy oppose our march.

BATTLE FIELD,  
THREE MILES FROM MATAMORAS,  
May 10, 1846.

[Giving an account of the battles of the eighth and ninth named Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma.] On the seventh we left Point Isabel and lay on our arms after marching seven miles. On the morning of the eighth we moved on steadily and at a little before twelve the enemy were reported in force some miles in our advance. We pushed on and by two o'clock deployed in order of battle, the Mexicans showing themselves in line in much superior numbers. At three they opened their batteries upon us — but I cannot detail at this time. Suffice it to say, that all behaved gallantly, the Fifth sustaining the only cavalry charge made during the day. Captain John Page was mortally wounded, Major Ringgold desperately. Many slight wounds were received, and a

considerable number of the rank and file killed. We bivouacked on the field, and on the morning of the ninth, after a council of war, we pushed forward, the enemy showing their force in rear of their original position. They retired as we advanced, and the entire battle field was examined. At least eighty of their dead were found, besides many large graves. The prisoners reported their force as seventy-five hundred. At twelve we went ahead rapidly, and at three o'clock we engaged the foe in an entrenched camp three or four miles from the fort. Here ensued the most desperate and bloody fight our army has known since 1812.

The fight lasted until near night, when we were completely victorious, the enemy totally routed with the loss of all their cannon, baggage, etc. Much of the fight was desperate, personal, hand-to-hand encounters, but the eager courage of our men overcame superior numbers and drove them from their strong position. Many hundreds have fallen, the loss of the Mexicans has been terrific. Their dead are strewed over the whole field. We have five officers killed, and twelve wounded, Colonel McIntosh desperately, and Captain Hove will lose his right arm. Edmund and myself, though in the thickest of the fight — men falling around us on all sides — were unhurt. All have behaved as if the word fear was not in their vocabularies. General La Vega and many others are

prisoners. Such a victory is hardly on record. I cannot write another word now but will give you a thousand particulars when I have leisure.

[More particulars of the battles of the eighth and ninth of May, 1846.]

AT OUR OLD CAMP OPPOSITE MATAMORAS,  
May 13, 1846.

On the eighth, as I anticipated, we met the enemy on the prairie and fought them five hours — whipping them severely. It was mostly a cannonade, the Fifth being the only regiment closely engaged. To describe more particularly our position on the eighth — we had proceeded quietly on our route until near twelve at noon when we learned that the enemy were in great force in our front some two miles. We almost immediately halted at some ponds, all getting a refreshing drink. We were then deployed in order of battle and marched steadily forward until we saw the enemy's line more than a mile distant. The Fifth Infantry was the right of our line, then Ringgold's battery, next the Third and Fourth Infantry, next two eighteens under Lieutenant Churchill, then eleven companies of artillery, the Eighth Infantry, and on the extreme left Duncan's battery protected by a squadron of Dragoons. Our force in the aggregate was less than twenty-one hundred men and we were encumbered by a large wagon train (about two

hundred) loaded with stores and ammunition for the fort. The Mexican lines extended far beyond our right and left, and we have since ascertained that they had more than seven thousand regular troops in the field. The action commenced by a cannonade from the enemy's right and was soon followed by the pieces at the intervals through their entire line. Ringgold's and Duncan's batteries were at once thrown forward replying with a most deadly fire. The enemy's shot were playing briskly through our ranks, the wounded and dying at our feet producing no effect upon the admirable discipline of the men — the occasional expression of a wish to charge being the only evidence that they felt their position out of musket range and exposed to the deadly fire of many cannon. Our eighteens opened at the same time with the other guns and evidently produced confusion in the enemy's centre. We soon saw the movement of a large force of cavalry from the Mexican left toward our right with the evident intention of taking us in the flank. It was seen by our General, and the Fifth were ordered to the right and front to intercept them. After rapidly marching more than one-fourth of a mile the word was, "Here they come!" and we at once formed square against cavalry and stood firmly at a shoulder. They rode upon us eight hundred strong. When about a hundred feet from us they delivered their fire and continued their charge. A few of our men fell wounded

but not a man wavered. At this moment the fire of our second front was delivered with as much precision as on drill, and with a most withering effect. Walker's rangers, about twenty of whom were on our right, gave them their rifle balls with their usual coolness and deadly aim. They immediately broke to the left and went off at a run. During the charge, two pieces from Ringgold's battery under Ridgely had come up in our rear and as the ground would not allow them to pass on our flanks, we by a side movement gave them room to fire and their deadly grape and canister completed the rout which we had so well begun. The cannonade continued until night closed in when the spectacle was magnificent. The prairie was burning brilliantly between the two armies and some twenty pieces of artillery thundering from right to left, while through the lurid scene was heard the tramping of horses and the wild cheering of the men. After dark our train was parked upon the battle field and we lay upon our arms until daylight. This ended the battle of Palo Alto. Major Ringgold and Captain Page mortally wounded. The enemy suffered horribly, having by their own statement about five hundred killed.

In the morning our line was formed, our train left entrenched, defended by a rear guard and four twelve-pounders. The Fifth was pushed forward by heads of companies to a point of chaparral a half mile in

advance of the line. The ground was reconnoitred and it was ascertained that the main body had retreated during the night, having buried a portion of their dead. Skirmishes under Captains McCall and C. F. Smith were thrown in advance to feel the enemy and ascertain their position.

Between eleven and twelve we marched, the Fifth in advance followed by Ringgold's battery under Ridgely. After marching six miles we learned that the skirmishers had discovered the enemy strongly posted two miles in our advance. It is almost impossible to understand with what our little army had to contend unless the ground is seen. On each side extending for miles was a dense thorny thicket or chaparral cut by deep ravines and narrow ponds through which passes the road to Matamoras. As we advanced we heard the skirmishers engaged — halted — to let Ridgely's battery pass, and then immediately deployed as skirmishers to the left of the road and pushed for the enemy. The chaparral broke us into small parties and when I came up to the skirmishers under McCall I had not more than twenty of my men with me and not another of the Fifth in sight. The enemy's grape and canister from ten pieces, nines, and sixes were whipping the bushes about our ears, the small shot falling thickly amongst us. I, at this time, examined their position. They were strongly posted on a ravine which crosses the road



where it makes a slight turn. It was deep and the crest opposite us entrenched to protect their Infantry — the whole surrounded by a thicket so dense that we could not see into it. The few of us who were in this advanced position saw at once the absolute necessity of charging their guns to gain the battle, and for this purpose moved to the right where we were joined by many more of the Fifth on the edge of the road. We had already begun our charge when the shout came down the road, "Charge Fifth!" A squadron of Dragoons charged by us immediately into their batteries. Most gallantly was it done while the welkin rung with our tremendous cheers. May dispersed the party at their guns but could not of course, with horse, maintain them. The Fifth dashed into the ravine after them and from right to left the most desperate hand-to-hand fighting ensued. The enemy here fought like devils. Our men, however, knew that if conquered they would get no quarter and there was no possibility of a retreat, and though surrounded by vastly superior numbers fought with desperation. Their aim was steady and often with a rest in the fork of a bush. In the hand-to-hand conflicts which were occurring in every part of the field our officers and men were decidedly superior.

The desperate conflict could not last and the Mexicans fled utterly routed. They were followed to the neighborhood of the fort where they took the river in

every direction receiving the fire of the eighteens on the parapet as they were swimming over. We have heard that three hundred were drowned in crossing, including their priest and several officers. Thus terminated one of the most desperate actions in which our army was ever engaged. We lost in killed and wounded about one hundred and forty. Lieutenant Inge fell in May's charge. Lieutenants Chadbourne and Cochrane on the eighth. Colonels McIntosh and Payne, Captain Hove, Lieutenants Gates and Jordan were badly wounded and many others slightly. The enemy must have lost at least one thousand men in the action and in the retreat. Of the Tampico Guarda Costas, one of the best regiments in their service, only twenty-six escaped. We took eight pieces of artillery, fifteen hundred stand of small arms, two hundred and forty thousand rounds of musket cartridges, about six hundred pack mules with all their packs, their camp equipage and the personal baggage of the officers, General Arista's portfolio, plate, tent, etc. The artillery battalion under Childs was held in reserve during the action, so that we actually had only about fourteen hundred men engaged while the enemy had a larger force than on the eighth, having been reënforced during the night by one thousand choice troops from Matamoras. They thought they had us in a *cul-de-sac* and cannot account for our victory. Edmund behaved with great gallantry taking a piece

and bringing it from the midst of the enemy. But it is impossible to make distinctions where all fought with equal courage. I saw no man falter and the object of each seemed to be to find the largest crowd of Mexicans. It is a glorious fact for the army that there were no volunteers with us. What will Mr. Black say now about the little drill sergeants, etc. ?

MATAMORAS, MEXICO,  
May 19, 1846.

My last hurried note was written from the battle field the morning after the desperate action of Resaca de la Palma. I hope you will receive my letter before you are made anxious by the newspapers. That I was not killed is wonderful as I was in the ravine where so many fell closely engaged with a much superior force, and I cannot express my gratitude to a kind God who yet spares me. During the tenth much was done to clear the field of the dead. I saw eighty-three in one pile already partially decomposed by the side of the pit into which they were to be thrown. Many hundreds were lying about and the vultures were already at their widespread feast, the wolves howling and fighting over their dreadful meal. Before morning the scent of the carnage became almost insupportable. On the eleventh we marched to Fort Brown, named after its gallant defender who was killed in it by a shell on the fourth. General Taylor

and the wounded went to Point Isabel. Poor Hove's right arm was amputated near the shoulder. He is doing well. Colonels McIntosh and Payne are in great danger.

On the seventeenth General Taylor having returned from Point Isabel we were ordered a few miles up the river where preparations had been made to cross and invest Matamoras.

On the eighteenth the passage commenced, the enemy offering no opposition. A few companies as skirmishers, a squadron of Dragoons and a field battery of four pieces were over and the Fifth on the move when we learned that Arista with his entire force, still forty-five hundred strong, were in full retreat. We crossed and the residue of the army went down the river and passed over at the town. We marched immediately to the city, five miles, and soon saw our flag floating over the Mexican fort. We halted without our baggage in a ploughed field in the suburbs, not being allowed to enter the city, and lay down upon the bare ground tired and hungry enough. Towards night the interdict was removed and I went to town where I soon succeeded in getting a good cup of coffee and a piece of bread at a restaurant. The town is much like St. Augustine, only with larger, wider streets and finer public buildings. Strong patrols were kept moving through the streets to protect the inhabitants and prevent riot. We found near four hundred of

Arista's wounded whom he had left in the hospital when he fled. It is thought that General Taylor will move towards Monterey, a large fortified city three hundred miles on the road to the City of Mexico, but no one knows with certainty what he will do. . . . How long we remain inactive where we are is very uncertain. The volunteers are arriving in great numbers and an immense wagon train must be collected before we can move forward upon Monterey which we think is the first point at which the enemy can make a decided stand. By the road it is nearly three hundred miles here to that town.

CAMP MATAMORAS,

May 30, 1846.

MY DEAR SON, — <sup>1</sup>

Your excellent letter was received long since. I acknowledged its reception immediately in a letter to your mother, and should have written to you before now, were I not so occupied and so inconveniently situated in a tent, as to make it almost impossible to write at all. One of the most violent storms which has assailed us in this region is now raging and it has cost me a good ducking and much labor to secure my tent. Several of my brother officers are at this moment standing about in the rain, their tents completely

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Lee Kirby Smith, a boy not yet eleven years old, graduated at West Point, Class of 1857, and commanded a demi-Brigade, United States Army, at the Battle of Corinth, Miss., October 4, 1862, where he was mortally wounded, shot in the face as his father was, dying aged twenty-six.

blown away and their trunks, bedding, etc., lying about in the wet and mud.

Since the battles of Palo Alto (long pole) and Resaca de la Palma, which means the watering place of the Palmas — Palma being the name of a family — I have written twice to your mother, once from the battle field, the day after the action, and again since the capture of Matamoras. I hope those letters have both been received. I trust, my dear boy, that you in your prayers return thanks to a kind Providence who has protected your father in the extreme perils through which he has passed uninjured. Many men were killed and wounded at his side by bullets, undoubtedly aimed at him. Remember this with a grateful heart in your daily devotion and pray earnestly that he may be spared in coming dangers so that he may train you and your brother in the service of that just and Omnipotent Master to whom we must all finally render an account.

Your old friend Ryan,<sup>1</sup> who once saved your life, was shot through the shoulder by my side on the ninth, and Geary, whom you will remember, was shot in the forehead and fell at my feet in the action of the eighth. They are both recovering rapidly, though I fear Ryan will have a stiff arm.

We think there will be no more fighting in the valley of the Rio Grande — the Mexicans are so

<sup>1</sup> Private soldier who had saved the boy from drowning at four years old.

entirely routed, and we are so much strengthened by the arrival of volunteers that it is thought they cannot in this quarter assemble another army to oppose us. . . .

CAMP AT MATAMORAS,  
June 2, 1846.

A mixed command of volunteers and regulars is to be sent in a few days to Reynosa and Camargo from fifty to eighty miles up the river. I think they will have no fighting and the "Bloody Fifth" will not be sent. Major Belton is daily expected to arrive with some additional companies of artillery and we shall then have in the field a regular force of more than three thousand, and probably a volunteer force of ten thousand. I do not think from all I can learn from the most intelligent Mexicans here that the "magnanimous Mexican nation" will make peace on any terms, until they are dictated to her in the valley of Mexico. What long marches, bloody sieges, and dreadful battles are to be encountered before then cannot be foretold but that all will have to be met is most certain. . . . No news except the Second Infantry ordered here and a rumor that General Scott is coming to take command of the Army of Invasion.

[The tenth of June Captain Smith, having heard of the sudden death of his father at St. Augustine, Florida, and there being no active operations at that

time with the army, obtained a leave of sixty days, during which time he visited his family at the North, and started on his return to the front August 24, via Buffalo, Chicago, and Alton.]

STEAMBOAT "NORTH CAROLINA,"

FORTY MILES BELOW ST. LOUIS,

September 5, 1846.

"There is no end to human calamity!" Ill luck has pursued me every step from Chicago, where I arrived Saturday, the twenty-ninth ultimo. I was there encouraged with the idea that I should reach St. Louis by the night of the first, and to ensure it I engaged an extra in company with some other gentlemen, paying double fare to Peru where we expected to meet a boat. We were to reach that place in fourteen hours. We started at four in the afternoon and at daylight next morning were only thirty-six miles from Chicago, and did not arrive at our destination until night when we found the Illinois very low and no boat. By our contract we were to have been sent forward in the mail stage, but it passed in the night, full, and we lost our chance. In the morning we took another extra to Peoria — seventy miles — with an express engagement to overtake the mail at that point, or to be sent on immediately. We arrived at Peoria in good time but the agent for the line utterly refused to fulfil the contract and we were detained twenty-four hours, neither threats nor bribes being of any avail. My



fellow sufferers were Judge B ——, the M. C. from St. Louis and his wife, a lovely lady, a Dr. L —— from St. Louis and a Mr. H —— and his sister from Lysander. We finally got off in the mail stage Tuesday night and thought our detentions were over. We were to reach Alton at eight and St. Louis by ten in the morning. It rained violently, the roads were heavy and it was after twelve at noon when we drove down the hill into Alton. The packet was gone and we were detained until this morning, when I succeeded in getting on board a light draught Ohio River boat which I shall leave at Cairo where I hope to overtake the "Tempest," a fast down-river boat. I have been so much delayed that I fear I cannot reach my regiment 'til after my leave has expired. I shall be much mortified and distressed should there be an engagement before I join and after the expiration of my leave. A fight seems certain as the Mexicans are concentrating a strong force at Monterey, and although Paredes is dethroned I think it will not alter the relations between the two Governments. Santa Anna may prove our bitterest foe. I find whenever I meet an officer that dissatisfaction with the brevets, and total disgust at the whole course of the Administration is felt by a large majority of the army. I have determined to keep quiet and simply do my duty without looking for distinction. . . . As I am now on the mighty river, I cannot suffer from

much more detention and shall hope to overtake the Second Infantry at New Orleans. . . .

CAIRO, Sept. 6, 1846.

I landed here at daylight this morning. The "Tempest" had passed here last evening, so here I must wait another opportunity. You perhaps remember this place at the mouth of the Ohio. There is an immense hotel and a few warehouses which were erected during the speculating mania of '35 and '36. They are now unoccupied and are sad monuments of that period of folly. The site of the town is overflowed in high water and in the hot season it is exceedingly sickly, bilious and intermittent fevers being prevalent. We stepped from our boat upon an old hull which has been moored here and fitted up as a house of *entertainment*. It was a boat of the largest class and the magnificent cabin of one of the most expensive boats ever built on the Western waters has been transferred to it, the staterooms being used for sleeping apartments, and the long range of saloons for drawing-rooms, dining-room, etc. It is well kept, no gambling or drinking being allowed on board; each one, however, is compelled to be his own servant, everything being exceedingly democratic. It is very hot and solitary, not a single boat being here this morning. The prospect outside is anything but inviting. The low grounds around are covered with rank, unwhole-

some-looking weeds, the river coated with a thick layer of yellow, slimy, putrid-looking ooze, the filth of the river Ohio for a hundred miles collected in the slack water at the mouth through which the catfish can scarcely squirm and upon which a light-footed lass might run, all lying under a burning sun unmoved by a breath of air. Over all reigns the stillness of a Sabbath morning unbroken by a sound save the screams of a dirty wench girl who is playing in the mud in the shadow of the boat with a pet bear. Imagine all this and you will have the scene which surrounds me and which I am doomed to *enjoy* the entire day. The only other guest the landlord has at this time is the captain of the steamer "Bulletin," waiting for a rise of water. He sits at present under the awning on the boiler deck intellectually employed with a long nine and an old newspaper. . . .

ST. CHARLES, NEW ORLEANS,  
September 23, 1846.

I have a sad tale to tell you of all my ill luck since I wrote you from Cairo. I embarked at that place on the "Wave," commanded by Captain White, a very clever man. The boat was heavily freighted, having three hundred horses, some mules, and about two hundred sheep on the lower deck and was certainly the *slowest team* I ever saw. For two days we paddled leisurely down stream. I was all anxiety to overtake

the Second Infantry at New Orleans which in a fast boat would have been quite practicable but I despaired on the slow rolling "Wave," and had the happiness of shifting my quarters to the "Wing and Wing" on the third day. Fast then we sped for the Crescent City — but a new calamity befell me. I was taken sick, evidently threatened with bilious fever. I kept up however in the hope of overtaking Colonel Riley and on Saturday evening reached here just a few hours too late, the Second having left that morning. I was down sick with remittent bilious fever and compelled to send for a doctor. By last Friday I was convalescent but the doctor would not allow me to proceed in a boat which left for Brasos that day, so I sent his certificate and reported myself sick here. . . . Thursday the twenty-fourth I shall leave for Point Isabel in the "McKim," having sufficiently recovered my health.

ANCHORAGE OFF BRASOS, SANTIAGO,  
STEAMER "McKIM,"  
September 30, 1846.

It is early morning. We have lain here rolling in a heavy sea since yesterday. The lighter has just come off bringing news of a dreadful fight at Monterey. The steamer "James L. Day" is firing up inside to take the news to New Orleans and I hasten to give you what little news I have been able to gather. The fight commenced by an attack on the fortified

heights near Monterey on the twenty-first, our forces gradually gaining on the enemy until the twenty-fourth, when General Ampudia capitulated. Our loss was terrible, that of the Mexicans not yet ascertained. On our side Captain L. N. Morris, Captain Field, Brevet Major Barbour, Lieutenant Irwin, Lieutenant Hazlitt, Lieutenant Wood, Captain McKavett, and Lieutenant Hoskins were killed and many other officers badly wounded. It is said there are five hundred of the rank and file killed and wounded. The Tennessee volunteers suffered much. General Worth, it is reported, greatly distinguished himself. We know on board no other particulars, not even the terms of the capitulation. I could lie down and cry of vexation and grief at not being there, though perhaps it is all for the best and we shall have more fighting. . . .

CAMARGO,  
October 12, 1846.

I arrived here a week ago today and have been detained for a train and escort to proceed to Monterey. This is the hottest and dustiest place I have ever seen. It is on the right or east bank of the San Juan about three miles from its junction with the Rio Grande. The banks are about thirty feet above the present level of the water, though in the spring it rises five or six feet above their crests, washing away the foundations of the houses which are principally built of stone

one story in height. Some of them are rather imposing looking buildings and have been surrounded by fine gardens, orange groves, etc. Alas ! they are now laid waste by flood and war. The best of the inhabitants are gone. Speaking of an escort to Monterey, it is at all times unsafe for any but strong parties to pass through this country, and the danger, of course, is much increased now when it is torn by invasion. I have received an order from General Patterson to organize an escort for the supply train from the recovered sick of the regular and volunteer forces left here by the army now at Monterey. On inquiry I find I shall have a command of about seventy-one regulars and one hundred and twelve volunteers rank and file, with nearly twenty officers. With this Falstaff regiment with which I should blush to march through Coventry, I shall take the field in the course of the week and shall probably reach Monterey in eight or nine days. Monterey and the valley in which it is situated is described by all who have seen it as unsurpassed in beauty, and having a climate which may be envied by all the rest of the world. The city, which usually contains about twelve thousand inhabitants, is strongly fortified and stands at the foot of that immense range of mountains known as the Sierra Madre, at the outlet of the defile which leads to the city of Saltillo and on the head waters of the San Juan. . . . With regard to the battle I know little

more than you will learn from the papers. The Fifth (in which you are particularly interested), in common with the rest, behaved well and did good service. Only one man of the regiment was killed and some twenty-four wounded. Rossell received a slight flesh wound. I wonder where the ball found flesh enough for its passage, without hitting the bone. Of the numerous occurrences of the battle field, I have only time to relate one which struck me as particularly affecting. It is connected with the death of Brevet Major Phil Barbour. When struck by the ball which caused his death in a few seconds, he immediately drew from his bosom his wife's miniature, opened it and exclaimed: "Tell her I died on the field of victory!" put it to his lips and instantly expired. . . .

MONTEREY,  
October 26, 1846.

I wrote you from Camargo, which place I left on the fifteenth in command of my ragged battalion. It was a serious task to control such a heterogeneous body composed as it was of volunteers from different commands, sneaks and invalids of all the regular companies who were left behind at this place when the army advanced. Nevertheless, by rigid discipline and close watching I succeeded in controlling them. The first day's march was within a short distance of the Rio Grande upon the Mexican side, through a

tolerably fertile country with extensive corn fields and occasional sugar fields. The fruit trees were oranges, pomegranates, peaches, bananas, with a few other inferior tropical fruits, not being many, however, of any kind. The population was much greater than I anticipated, though in intelligence the inhabitants but little surpassed the aborigines of the west, and are certainly inferior to them in physical development. We advanced steadily on the second day to the city of Mier, on a branch of the Rio Grande, a neat and tolerably well-built Mexican town, the inhabitants of rather better character than any I had seen in the country. The stream on which it stands is a beautiful, clear, rapid torrent running over a rocky bed. From this place the route passed through Punta Aguada, Cerralvo, and Marina. The country became exceedingly rocky, broken, and barren, with very few inhabitants between the towns. The horizon was closed by the lofty Sierra whose blue summits were crowned with clouds. As we approached the mountains their peculiar character became more evident. They are undoubtedly of volcanic origin and of most sublime appearance, in one place shooting up to a vast height in a cluster of cones whose summits pierced the clouds, their sharp points showing above their fleecy belts, in another towering in huge beetling cliffs again broken into every fantastic shape, presenting on their lofty summits the appearance of



ruined castles, cities, and fortifications. Immediately on passing through Marina, which was at noon on the twenty-second, the unsurpassably beautiful valley of Monterey broke upon our sight, lying in the lap of the mountains watered by numerous sparkling streams, smiling with verdure, dotted with rustic habitations, herds of cattle, droves of sheep and horses, and waving fields of maize and cane. Surrounded as this panorama is by the loftiest mountains I ever beheld, it certainly presented a combination of beauty and sublimity such as I have never seen equaled. On the twenty-third we reached General Taylor's camp which is three miles from the city. I reported and then proceeded to the city where the Second Division under General Worth to which the Fifth is attached is stationed. I soon embraced Edmund and was cordially greeted by my brother officers. Ted is quite ruddy from the mountain air. He has become quite a Spaniard and is decidedly the most popular officer of the army with the natives. He is a guest, and through his influence, I am, also, of one of the most distinguished men of the place, a member of Congress and once Governor of the Province, Yclept Don Jesus Treato. I have been incessantly on duty since I arrived, and am now a member of a General Court Martial writing this scrawl amid the cross-questioning of witnesses. I have been so occupied that I haven't had time to examine the features

of the battle field. I have, however, already seen enough of the strength of the place to be utterly surprised that it should ever have been carried by storm. . . . Various speculations are current here in regard to the continuance of the war, and our movements after the termination of the armistice. It is thought General Taylor will not attempt any forward movements with his present means. . . .

MONTEREY, MEXICO,  
November 2, 1846.

. . . Our regiment with all General Worth's division are quartered in the town, which is situated in a nook of the huge mountains which lie immediately around it on three sides, their frowning and broken peaks seeming almost to hang over it. On the east the Saddle Mountain, so called from its striking resemblance in outline to a Mexican saddle; on the south the Sierra; on the west the Mitre Mountain, its crest from our position appearing as regularly cut with points as a royal crown. The scenery far surpasses anything in the States, and our traveled friends say, anything in Europe. I wish you could gaze with me on one of the magnificent sunsets here. The god of day slowly sinking behind the cloud-capped summits of the Sierra whose frowning cliffs are presented to us in the deepest shadow, their crests apparently supporting the sky gorgeously painted with every hue of the spectrum, while the deep lateral gorges of the

mountain are bathed in light long after the sun has disappeared from our view and we are enveloped in the shadows of evening. The moon here has all the brilliancy we boast in Florida, the climate is as soft, the air as pure and I judge from the tropical fruits growing here in luxuriance and abundance that there is no danger of the frosts which have rendered northern Florida almost a waste. We have exposed in the markets here the fruits and productions of all climes. From the mountain heights the apple, pear, potato, etc., and from the plains the orange, fig, banana, pomegranate, date, *et idoneum genus*. It truly might be an earthly paradise were the inhabitants civilized. They, alas, are lost in the most groveling superstition and ignorance and are under a government that tramples them to the dust. I trust a better day is about to dawn on this benighted region and that another generation under a better government may abandon their idleness and popish idolatry. The town is built entirely of stone, the houses mostly one story in height, with flat roofs, the walls very thick, the windows unglazed, though heavily grated with iron bars and at night secured with ponderous shutters. The doors which are of the most substantial character would be well suited to a state prison in our country, the floors are all of cement like the basement floors in St. Augustine. The narrow streets all paved are enclosed between lofty stone walls; the gutters which

with us are on each side next the trottoir are here in the centre of the street. There are several large plazas or public squares — on the main one stands the Cathedral, a very large and fine building in the Moorish style. On the principal stone bridge over the San Juan is a large statue of the Virgin Mary, having around her shoulders a green cloak and on her head a gilded crown. All Mexican passers uncover and bow, perhaps kneel and pray to this image. Near the bridge was much of the slaughter in the late action. The walls of many of the houses are thickly marked with shot, — the one in which I am now writing had the projecting gratings torn from the windows by cannon balls and in every direction may be perceived the traces of recent battle.

On the west of the town, crowning the summits of the lower mountains, are the forts and the Bishop's palace (Obispado), so gallantly carried by our division under General Worth. The Bishop's palace in the distance realizes all I have read and seen in pictures of the old castles of Europe, now standing in ruins, monuments of the feudal ages. I have been so much occupied since my arrival that I have not had time closely to examine this interesting work or the many ruins which surround the place and prove that its prosperity has been long on the decline.

There is not a broken arch or fallen column which does not interest me. I would like to explore every

ruin and trace in the fragments and shattered sculpture the history of a fallen people, the descendants of the proud and magnificent Spaniards. I mentioned in my last that Captain Ridgely, after gaining a brilliant reputation in the recent battles, was thrown from his horse about noon on the twenty-fourth, and died on the twenty-seventh. How shocking after all the dangers he has passed through to die so miserable a death ! Major Lear died of his wounds on the thirty-first, and was buried yesterday with all the honors. . . . A thousand conjectures are afloat about our future movements, but they are *only* conjectures. It seems certain that Tampico will be attacked after the termination of the armistice. We hear that Santa Anna is assembling an army of thirty thousand men at San Luis Potosi where, should we advance, the Mexicans will make a desperate stand. I think, however, that we shall never go there. It is three hundred miles beyond Saltillo, at least one hundred of which is a perfect desert without wood or water. The route would be utterly impracticable for an army. I know from General Taylor that he will not attempt it unless compelled to do so by a positive order from the highest authority. It is supposed by some that the truce will be continued until the meeting of the Mexican Congress in December to give them an opportunity to make peace, but nothing definite can be known until the return of the express from Washington with

instructions consequent upon the capture of this place. The Cabinet will, of course, brood in solemn consultation before they decide and then will probably determine upon something far different from what we expect. General Wool has been heard from with his division at Monclova to the northwest of our position and about ninety miles from Saltillo. I can tell you nothing of the battle which you will not have learned from the papers. The Fifth, you will see, bore a distinguished part and have been honorably mentioned. I shall never cease to regret my absence. Such an opportunity occurs but once in a lifetime ! . . .

Uncle Edmund<sup>1</sup> was eight hours under fire in General Taylor's staff. The invitation he received from the General in the morning was: "Get up, Kirby, and come with me and I will give you a chance to be shot." . . .

MONTEREY, MEXICO,  
November 8, 1846.

Two or three days ago I rode with Uncle Edmund and a small party to the Bishop's palace of which I have spoken to you in a former letter. It was a glorious evening, as all are here, about an hour before sunset as we galloped our horses out of the western extremity of the city, our gay chat frequently interrupted by one or another pointing to the spot where some gallant spirit took its flight in the battle. After

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Edmund Kirby, Paymaster, U.S.A., on General Taylor's staff.

passing the suburbs we immediately struck the base of the hill upon which the ruined palace stands and ascended it by a winding road scarped from the rock and quite practicable for carriages. A near approach to this venerable work enabled us to see the elaborate carvings of its broad front which is entirely covered with them. Immediately over the main entrance is a deeply sculptured coat of arms, — I am not deep enough in heraldic lore to blazon it, — above it a stone statue of our Saviour standing in a niche supporting the Cross, with a carved radiation or glory around His head. The walls are many feet in height crowned with battlements and lofty turrets. In the centre of this spacious building is a square court containing a huge deep well some twelve feet in diameter. It is now dry but was once filled to within thirty feet of the surface. The grounds about the palace were irrigated from this well formerly, the hill on each side having been terraced and carefully cultivated from the summit to the plain below. Not a vestige of these gardens is perceptible now, the rains during the lapse of many years having washed away the earth, exposing the bare rock. . . . The ruined state of this massive construction, it having been long unfit for human habitation, proves its great antiquity. It must have been already crumbling to decay when it was first occupied as a military work in 1782. From the back of the palace the ridge of the hill continues to rise for

some two hundred yards, where it suddenly breaks off in a steep rocky declivity to the valley between it and the Mitre Mountain. Here previous to the capture was a Mexican sand bag battery, now removed, and in its place are the graves of two of the heroes who fell in taking it on the twenty-second ultimo, Captain Gillespie and another Texan volunteer. From this point nearly six hundred feet above the plain I gazed at the varied and magnificent view in silent admiration. I wish I could describe it in any language which would convey even a faint idea of the thrilling effect it had upon me.

It was just at the close of day, the sun having already disappeared behind the crest of the mountains crowned with fleecy clouds high above our heads. The glorious light was still streaming through the craggy ravine where winds the broad road to Saltillo. The San Juan here a mountain torrent was visible by its side for a long distance, its clear waters foaming and sparkling in the horizontal rays like dancing diamonds. Below as to the east lay the city, every street and plaza in full view, its white walls and battlements glancing through the green foliage in which the whole town is embowered, and beyond for a background to this lovely picture was the mighty Saddle Mountain. Immediately below our feet was the rich valley of Monterey stretching far away to the north chequered with waving fields of corn and cane, dotted



with hamlets, cut by numerous rivulets and irrigating canals, General Taylor's encampment appearing under the lofty trees at Walnut Springs with the light artillery on evening drill, their guns rapidly firing, each discharge echoing from the mountains with many reverberations. My companions who were themselves in the engagements pointed me to the places where fell the immortal heroes of those three days of conflict. There under that sycamore fell the gallant Morris, there the chivalric Barbour, by the side of that ruined wall, the fearless Watson, near by Lear received his last wound, in that ravine, McKavett was cut in twain by a twelve-pound shot, and far on our right cresting the summit of that craggy hill were the ruins of that fort so desperately carried at the point of the bayonet by the Fifth, and from whose walls our regimental banner was displayed, the first American flag which waved over a Mexican work on those memorable days. How tame and prolix is my description of a scene which I can never forget ! . . .

*Continued, Monday, November 10.* Saturday the same party whom I accompanied to the Bishop's palace proceeded on an exploring excursion into the country. We rode over the plain through enclosed fields about five miles to a rude Mexican village at the base of a mountain. Here we found the "Caliente," a famous hot spring of which we were in search. A stone house containing a few benches has

been erected near it for a dressing-room for the bathers. From it, by a few stone steps, we enter a basin some twenty feet square enclosed by a high wall of masonry containing the water as clear as crystal about four feet in depth. On plunging into the water I found it to my astonishment so hot that I couldn't bear it at first without considerable pain. Where it gushes from the earth it is almost scalding hot. It must be heated by internal fires far away in the bosom of the earth. The water is slightly mineral containing some sulphur and nitre, and is said to be extremely good for cutaneous diseases.

Yesterday we were notified that the second division under General Worth were to start for Saltillo on Thursday morning, and we are all now in the bustle of preparation. We are to be joined by the first regiment of Kentucky volunteers under my old friend Tim McKee, and the Seventh Infantry are to be left here. We shall probably garrison Saltillo for the winter, though everything is very uncertain. As we are not told what is to be done conjectures are various. One that we, General Worth's division, are to be joined by General Wool's command and after the fall of Tampico, which is to be taken by the other wing of the army under Generals Taylor and Patterson, are to meet them at San Luis Potosi, and together secure Santa Anna's other leg ! I would much prefer to have gone to Tampico, where I think will be the

first fighting and where we could hear frequently from the United States. There are some advantages, however, in the Saltillo station. It is in a high mountainous country where there is no fear of bilious or of yellow fever. . . . There is a report, credited by the most intelligent Mexicans here, that Santa Anna has ordered Tampico to be abandoned and that he will attempt no opposition to us, until we are farther in the interior when he expects to use us up as the Russians did Napoleon — all but the frost and snow. . . . I saw General Taylor last evening. He is going with us to Saltillo and will start the other column when he returns. It is late and I must close as I have to be stirring at daylight. . . .

SALTILLO,  
November 23, 1846.

. . . This is a larger town than Monterey, containing fourteen thousand inhabitants, but is not so well built, except in the central part. The building material is clay formed into square blocks and hardened in the sun. The Cathedral is a gorgeous affair, the altarpiece is more than thirty feet in height by twenty-five in breadth, and is composed of pillars, wreaths, mouldings, etc., heavily gilded. It contains nine niches in each of which is a statue as large as life, the central and upper one being the Virgin. There are some thirty statues in this church and some fine paintings. The image of our Saviour is repeated

in every part of it. In one place he is represented as just dead, most magnificently laid out in a glass case; his countenance is truly lovely, with a fine black moustache, his head bound with a silk fillet. Immediately above him is a statue of the Mother with the Child in her arms. She is represented as a most lovely woman elegantly arrayed in richly ornamented white satin robes, which are sustained by an angel. Her whole person is covered with spangles, chains, and jewels. Opposite this is a thrilling Crucifixion, the wound in the side bleeding, the arms and legs gashed, and the pallid countenance expressing the last agonies of death. The religion of the inhabitants is a mixture of the Roman Catholic and the superstitions of paganism. They are awfully addicted to ringing bells. Every church and chapel tower holds several of great size. They are strongly alloyed with silver and their tones are louder and finer than any I have ever heard in the United States. "From morn to dewy eve" 'tis clang, clang, bang, bang, ding dong. At stated periods of the day, at certain signals from some old monster bell all the people, no matter how engaged, at work or at play, in the street or in the house, uncover rapidly, cross themselves and mutter a prayer. This universal reverence to the Deity of all the people at the same time strikes the stranger as a beautiful and almost sublime custom, and is strongly contrasted with our manner, for whatever may be

our sentiments we make no outward show of religious feeling. It is painful to know that these people actually do not comprehend the reason of their acts. I asked a man why he took off his hat and crossed himself. He replied: "Because it is twelve o'clock." Another probably would say: "Because the priest told me to do so." This town is built so high up among the mountains that the climate is quite cold notwithstanding its southern latitude. The apple and pear grow to perfection and wheat is the staple. The great want is wood. Its scarcity renders the country almost uninhabitable. We can't obtain enough to cook with properly, and what we do get is in sticks not larger than my arm, brought many miles on jackasses. One of the principal productions of the country is the aloe, agave, maguey or century plant, it being known by each of these names. From it the "pulque" a fermented and exceedingly intoxicating drink is made. The plant is cultivated with great care and grows to an enormous size, the tall flower shafts shooting up often thirty feet. The centre shaft is drawn out, leaving a bowl which fills three times a day with juice which when fermented resembles buttermilk, bearing on its surface a froth like that on a pail of milk just drawn from the cow. It has an acid unpleasant taste much relished by the natives. The plant after a few days is suffered to rest when it throws out another central shoot. It is tapped three times a year.

Our regiment is quartered in an old Franciscan monastery with a large chapel attached to it. It is filled with evidences of the gross superstition of the people. A fat, old, licentious-looking friar wanders about, sole representative of his departed brethren. My quarters are in an apothecary's shop with its shelves, labeled boxes and counter all remaining. The counter serves for a bunk for N—— and myself, while M—— occupies the counting-room. In spite of all the scrubbing I have bestowed upon it, the place smells vilely of pills, rancid lard, etc., and besides is a good stand for fleas, which are about the size of small crickets.

We are quite as much in the dark here with regard to the probable movements of the army as you can be. We are stationed on the salient point of our conquest, less than two thousand strong, entirely inactive, and so far as we know there are no troops of the enemy within two hundred miles of us. Santa Anna is recruiting, drilling, and equipping an army at San Luis Potosi already thirty thousand strong. He is casting all the church bells into cannon — I wish he had those that are deafening me at this moment — and says he will redeem the honor of the Mexican arms if we will pay him a visit at San Luis. He well knows it is almost impossible for an army drawing its supplies from the rear to march upon that place. . . . The intelligent portion of the Mexican population are of

the opinion, and express it to us without reserve, that the war is *wicked* and aggressive on the part of the United States. They claim that Texas never extended farther than the Nueces, and say that it would have been yielded to that river without opposition. The inhabitants generally have not suffered by the war, but on the contrary have profited by it, while the army, it is said, are strong advocates for negotiation. If this war is to be protracted by the obstinacy of this people, I hope and expect to see the City of Mexico in another twelve months. . . .

SALTILLO,  
December 16, 1846.

. . . There is very little of interest to write of from this place, where we are probably stationed for some months, with no prospect of another action until the rainy season, when armies can march without dying of thirst. We do not expect peace, although as the Mexican Congress is now in session the question must soon be settled. It is perfectly healthy here, the nights quite cold. . . . Some of the customs of these people seem very strange. Their funeral ceremonies are at least remarkable. A few days since I observed a funeral procession with the body laid upon the bier, decorated with ostrich plumes, wax candles, etc., and in front of it were three fiddlers playing away as hard as they could scrape. Upon inquiring of Don Luis, a Mexican merchant, what it meant, he said they were

Penablas. The Penablas are the remnant of an Indian tribe who occupy a portion of the city by themselves. They are civilized and a stranger would find it very difficult to distinguish them from the Mexicans. A few days ago I saw a woman, poor superstitious creature, going on her knees with a lighted candle in her hand. She crawled across the plaza and down a paved street in this way as far as I could see. It was undoubtedly a penance ordered by the padre.

Cock fighting is quite the rage among these semi-barbarians. Yesterday I rode into a cock pit, and you may imagine my astonishment when I beheld the old priest presiding, receiving the bets, and heeling the chickens, as putting on the iron spurs or slashers is technically called. I am told that this is nothing uncommon, that on any Sunday afternoon I may find them thus engaged.

I wish you could take a peep into my quarters. I have mentioned in a previous letter that I live in a store attached to the house of a very respectable man, Don Ramoon Flores, once Governor of the Department. N—— sleeps on one end of the counter and on the other I lay my bones at night. M—— lives in the counting-room where also we set our table. Señor Flores is very polite and occasionally sends us a nice dish from his table, a bowl of delicious preserved grapes, or some excellent quince jam. The old gentleman is now absent at his hacienda, distant about



thirty leagues. He has gone for his wife and daughters, who were sent there on the approach of our army. He has found that we treat them kindly, "the big scare" is over and he is not afraid to bring the young ladies back. He will probably return in four or five days, when, as I am quite a favorite, I intend seeing something of ladies' society here, which I haven't yet had an opportunity to do. It is almost certain now that General Taylor will make this his headquarters. . . . The General is now gone to Victoria where he will leave a strong force. General Wool is at Parras, ninety-two miles to the west with two thousand men. Lieutenant Franklin came in from that place yesterday and says they expect to be attacked there before long. (I don't believe they will.) The old year is fast passing. In twenty days it will have yielded its place to forty-seven ! . . .

STEAMBOAT "ROUGH AND READY,"  
JUST BELOW THE MOUTH OF THE SAN JUAN,  
January 22, 1847.

On the morning of the eighth we but little dreamed of being ordered to leave Saltillo, where you have learned from my letters we were pleasantly quartered. I certainly was nearly domesticated in the family of Don Ramoon Flores. After dinner I had lain down upon my counter to take a *siesta* and had hardly composed myself, when to my surprise my friend, Lieutenant A—— of the Dragoons, roused me with the

cry: "Up! you will be on the march in an hour." He had just arrived from Camargo with dispatches from General Scott, and though his lips were sealed by the General's orders, I heard enough to convince me we were to go to the coast. Major Staniford came to my quarters immediately after, briefly ordering before he put spurs to his horse: "Have your company ready to march in thirty minutes." Our preparations were soon made, and I left Saltillo where I had been almost two months, with more regret than I should any other place where I have been in Mexico. The inhabitants had rapidly gained confidence in the regulars and were much alarmed when they found we were about leaving them to the mercy of the volunteers, of whom they have the utmost dread, and by whom they are generally treated with the utmost barbarity. I have kept a sort of diary since I left the city of fountains, and although it contains nothing of much interest, I will transcribe it for you.

*January 9.* Our regiment under Major Staniford left Saltillo about one in the afternoon, preceded by the artillery battalion under Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Childs, which started at seven in the morning with Duncan's light artillery. Three companies of the Sixth Infantry were encamped five miles from town. We passed them and bivouacked after dark on a creek thirteen miles from the city. This stream with other rivulets rises in the springs around Saltillo

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forming the head waters of the San Juan. The night was dark, the clouds threatened rain, which fell before morning in torrents, — the first shower in two months. Many of the officers, relying on the uniform dryness of the weather, neglected to pitch their tents. I, however, believing that everything in Mexico is deceptive, pitched mine in which Lieutenants Rossell, Farelly, and myself spread our blankets, and would have slept comfortably if Butler's volunteers had not made so much noise that the poppy god took flight till after midnight. Reveille was beaten before four o'clock, but at a still earlier hour the rain drove several of my brother officers to my tent for shelter, and their complaints and jokes broke my rest for the residue of the night. They were "dimnition, damp, cold, disagreeable bodies," and my liquor case suffered a fearful diminution in warming up their shivering clay.

*January 10.* At six, though still dark, we began our march and at ten in the morning reached the little village of Los Muertes. This small town which, when we passed before, was filled with smiling inhabitants, now presented a sad picture of the desolation produced by war. The people were all gone, not one left, driven off by the volunteers, the houses in ruins, the shade trees girdled or cut down, and the ground strewn by the carcasses of dead horses and mules. It was a dark, drizzling day and was altogether a sad, desolate scene. The little river was alone unchanged. Its clear waters

rippled over their gravelly bed with the same cheerful sound. At half-past eleven we arrived at the famous pass of Los Muertes — the dividing line between the Departments of Coahuilla and New Leon. At one we encamped at Riconada. Here two months ago was a beautiful village, but all is now as at Los Muertes marked by the desolating hand of war. It rained nearly all the afternoon but we had plenty of wood, a rare thing in Mexico, and our bright blazing camp fires soon made us all comparatively comfortable. The three companies of the Sixth overtook us here, and the artillery battalions are but a short distance in advance. I find my pony's back very sore, and shall be compelled to foot it tomorrow. . . .

*January 11.* Struck our tents and marched at six. It was a cold day, the ground frozen for ten miles. General Worth overtook us at twelve, and we encamped four miles from Monterey at three o'clock, having marched a distance estimated at twenty-six miles. A very fatiguing day, most of the men footsore. The Second Dragoons passed us about five o'clock.

*January 12.* We were en route by break of day, preceded by the artillery battalion which we passed last evening. Our road was not only interesting from the sublime scenery on either hand, but it passed directly through the battle fields of the twenty-first, twenty-second, and twenty-third of September, leaving Fort Soldado which was carried by the Fifth at

the point of the bayonet on our right, and the Bishop's palace in the storming of which they assisted on the left. As I marched over this ground on the flank of my company I was struck by the remarks of the old soldiers as they pointed out to the recruits the places where remarkable events had occurred during the battles. Passed through Monterey and halted at Walnut Springs about eleven in the morning. Since we left for Saltillo, the burial places of those who fell at the storming of Monterey have been handsomely enclosed in walls of cut stone surrounding an area of a few rods. There are two of them, in one are the officers, in the other lie the bones of the enlisted men. Each has in the centre of the front wall a square column surmounted by a heavy cross. Here is also a cross at the head of each grave on which the name of the occupant is rudely carved. After a short halt at Walnut Springs we proceeded on our march and encamped near the village of San Francisco, having made thirteen miles.

*January 13.* Crossed the San Juan two miles from Marina which town we passed at twelve noon, and encamped at a small stream, Agua Negra, the entire distance variously estimated from eighteen to twenty-two miles. The day was hot and much detention arose from bad places in the road at one of which the staff wagon was upset.

*January 14.* Our march began at the usual hour, we passed Ramos and encamped before twelve noon

on a small brook near Papa Gallos, having made but nine miles. We were halted thus early because we heard that the streams and springs were dry, so that the first water we shall find is twenty miles from this place.

*January 15.* Marched two hours before sunrise. Twelve miles from our starting place we crossed the Arroyo Mijares (Woman's Creek) where two months since there was a fine spring and plenty of water, but we found it dry and toiled on six miles farther to Carrista before we found any good water. The weather oppressively hot, the road dusty and very rough. In the morning the Sixth Infantry overtook us and I was surprised to see Adam Miller, a drummer in one of the companies. I discharged him in June with more than two hundred dollars in his possession and started him for home (Rochester). He spent his money and re-enlisted, the fool ! We reached our camp at Cerralvo about four o'clock, having marched twenty-five miles. . . . Cerralvo is a beautiful Mexican town on a clear swift stream which finds its source in some large springs about a mile distant. Near are some rich old silver mines which have not been worked recently. We, however, saw signs in the mountains which convinced us that the miners have begun their labors again.

*January 16.* Left Cerralvo before sunrise, marched twelve miles to Punta Aguada, the headquarters of

the famous Ranchero chief, Canales. The town contained several hundred inhabitants before the war, but they have all been driven off by the volunteers. It is situated on a small stream which is crossed at our encampment by a dam beautifully built of cut stone and Roman cement. The entire division encamps together tonight.

*January 17.* Left camp at half-past five and were halted before twelve on the same stream at which we encamped last night, having marched sixteen miles. This stream at Punta Aguada is called Agua Largo and is the Alamo on which stands Mier, near its junction with the Rio Grande. Next day we marched through Mier and encamped five miles beyond on the banks of the Rio Grande. We heard today, January 18, that we were to descend the river from Camargo in boats and I hope it may prove true. Mier is the scene of the famous Texan battle, I believe the only one on record in which a victorious army surrendered to the vanquished, in the moment of success, which was actually the case on the occasion to which I allude. I have just taken a refreshing bath in the river and feel like a new man. I picked from the margin a beautiful little daisy in blossom. . . . Our encampment is near an extensive hacienda. When we passed before there were evidences of more virtue and comfort than is usual in a Mexican settlement. Now their houses and fences are broken, their cattle

and flocks destroyed by the troops who have passed, and an old man has just told me that to complete their misery, the Comanches recently assailed them taking what little they had left, and carrying off some of their women and children into endless captivity. Before morning, January 19, we had a regular norther. The wind pierced us to the very marrow but notwithstanding the weather our reveille was beaten at half-past two and we broke up our encampment and marched before five. The morning was as dark as possible, and how we got along over our wild path for more than an hour, I cannot tell, for actually a man couldn't see his file leader. We, however, stumbled along until after daybreak, blindly groping our way through the drifting sand. We reached Camargo about eleven in the morning and made our encampment on the barren, dusty plain amid the filth and dust of the old camping grounds. We have made a remarkable march. It will not be ten days until one o'clock since we left Saltillo, two hundred miles distant. Why has this rapid march been made? is the question in every one's mouth. No one *knows*, but all believe that an army is rapidly concentrating at the mouth of the river, which with the troops at Tampico under General Scott are to attempt the capture of San Juan D'Ulloa. Our camp is the most watched place imaginable, the storm continues unabated and the filthy débris of numerous previous



camp's ground to dust is whirling about us; it is really insupportable ! I wish I was " to hum."

*January 20 and 21.* We are still lying in camp waiting for a boat to take us down the river. The last artillery battalion and Marcy's company of our regiment have embarked this evening. The talk is all of peace in camp this evening. It is said the Mexican Congress are disposed to accept our terms, and General Scott before he left said that if a peace was concluded, the Fifth would go back to their old Lake Stations. I place but little faith in any of it — it promises too much happiness to be true.

*January 22.* At reveille we found our boat, the "Rough and Ready," had arrived and we prepared to embark. At two in the afternoon we were paddling down stream all congratulating ourselves on our good quarters and on our escape from Camargo, certainly the most filthy and disgusting place on this dirty earth. The twenty-third and twenty-fourth we still continued down the river with no incidents of importance, often bringing up with a terrible crash on a sand bar or bumping our nose in some short turn against the shore. This evening as usual we tied up at a wood yard where we remain until morning. There is an extensive hacienda at this place, and the young officers collected the Señoras for a ball. The dance continued until eleven o'clock. We reached Matamoras January 25 about three o'clock. . . . We

are all anxious to hear what Congress are doing, hoping they will pass the bill for a "retired" list for "worn out" officers and that they will not pass the bill increasing the number of regiments, as a reduction must follow a peace. We are lying by, a few miles from the spot selected for our encampment, which is about forty miles by water from the mouth. The river is exceedingly crooked, in one place after having gone sixty miles you are only three miles from the starting point. The entire distance from Camargo to the mouth is estimated at four hundred and fifty miles by water, while by land it is less than two hundred. Tonight all doubt as to our destination is removed — we are to go to Vera Cruz.

*January 26.* I feel very much indisposed to write even the few lines required for my diary. An ugly norther is blowing and I am tired and sick, my tent is cold and it is half-past ten at night. If, however, I suffer myself to neglect my diary once, I should soon give it up entirely. We got up steam and ran down to our camping ground, landed at eight in the morning, and made our camp on the left of the Fourth Infantry, the artillery battalion on the extreme right and the Sixth and Eighth Infantry will encamp on our left when they arrive. We found a mail for us here. . . . We hear of the probable passage of several army bills, such as the Retired List, Extra Major, Increase by Ten Regiments, etc., and all are now

speculating upon the promotions, but nothing can be determined until we see the laws. My friends here are of the opinion that both Marcy and myself will be brevetted. I will not, however, permit myself to form any expectations which may result in disappointment. We shall probably remain here some two or three weeks, and I trust shall hear something definite before we embark for our campaign at Vera Cruz.

Our ground here is admirably adapted for an encampment. It is a plain on the United States side of the river, covered by a short close grass and there's an abundance of wood.

CAMP PALO ALTO,  
January 27, 1847.

Our camp takes its name from the battle field which is but a few miles distant. Near us was the first pitched battle of the war; when, and where, will be the *last*? *Quien sabe?* The better we have become acquainted with the people and the Mexican character, the more assured we all feel that the course pursued by our government is only calculated to protract the war. Proud, overbearing, ignorant, superstitious, and cruel in the extreme in their own wars, they do not in the least comprehend our temporizing forbearance. If, from the moment of invasion, instead of paying them two prices for everything our army wanted, we had laid waste their country, taking their horses,

mules, herds, and crops, as they might have been required, leaving the sufferers to seek indemnification from their own government; if, instead of extending kindness and protection to the inhabitants, we had carried fire and sword into the heart of their country; if, instead of sending commissioners to treat asking for peace, and offering millions to make it, we had done all in our power to distress and harass them, treating them as a nation with contempt, they would not have thought as they now do, that we feared them; that the Whig party in our country were opposing the war, and about to leave the Executive without the means to prosecute it. They would have felt that they had no hope but in the successful operations of a campaign opposed to the entire strength of the United States. What their prospects would have been in such a case, their leaders and statesmen well know, and I believe that peace on advantageous terms would have been offered. *Now* we must fight it out with but little hope of a termination of the struggle in many years. . . . A few words in apology for my journal. It has been written from day to day with a stump of a pencil, often on my knee in my tent at night after a fatiguing march, when I was cold, weary and disgusted with everything in this miserable world. There is scarcely a line of interest in it. However, I send it knowing that *you* will value it though it is unfit for any other eye, —

but perhaps at some future day it will serve to recall scenes to my mind which otherwise would be forgotten. Do not let your partiality induce you to believe it is fit for general perusal. . . .

[Fragments from the continuation of the journal up to February 1.]

I am on a General Court Martial for the trial of Lieutenant A—— and such other prisoners as may be brought before it. The court sits without regard to hours, everything being ordered to be dispatched rapidly to get the division ready to embark for *parts unknown*. . . . In court today from nine o'clock in the morning until five in the afternoon. . . . Orders were received today (January 31) from General Scott for the division to embark as soon as practicable on the transports. The fleet under convoy to assemble under the lee of the Island of Lobos. I do not know its position with any certainty, but am told it is about one hundred miles to the north of Vera Cruz.

*February 1.* Lieutenant Ritchie of our regiment, it is reported, has been cut off by the enemy. He was bearing dispatches from General Scott to General Taylor, and was lassoed. Thus all the plans of the campaign have been obtained by the enemy. The first command under Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Childs was ordered to Brasos last evening to embark. They are for special service. The mail arrived today

and we hear that the Army Bill has passed extra majors and all excluding the lieutenant-general ! Our prospects in the army, I think, grow more gloomy every day. Not only does peace seem to be more distant, but when it does come we are in danger of being disbanded. I almost envy the old and disabled officers, and sometimes almost wish that a respectable wound would enable me to quit the field. I should like to spend the remnant of my days in the bosom of my beloved family, in the quiet of some neat country place raising my own cabbages à la Van Buren ! What a picture my fancy paints, never, alas, to be realized ! I must still go on in my thankless and perilous profession. I ought not, however, to complain. For twenty years I have worn the sword without facing an enemy. A few years of war will only fit me for a respectable old age, or put to rest my unquiet spirit forever.

*February 3.* The rest of the Eighth Infantry arrived this morning so that the entire division is now ready to embark. This afternoon a violent north wind has been blowing and it is growing cold very fast. It will be almost insupportable before morning. We cannot embark till the wind moderates. I am field officer of the day, and am shivering in my tent over a pan of coals, having to sit up this cheerless night, at least until a late hour. I have just visited the long chain of sentinels around this camp. The night is

gloomy and nothing breaks the silence of the sleeping army but the wolves which are howling in the immediate neighborhood. . . .

*February 4.* We are still lying in Camp Palo Alto and I see no immediate prospect of our departing. The weather is boisterous and it is impossible to embark on this coast except in a calm. There is no harbor and it is at all times a difficult and dangerous operation for vessels of heavy draught. The large transports are anchored in the offing and the troops and baggage are necessarily put on board by small steamers. The coast is straight, the shore gradually shelves off to deep water and in the most quiet times there is a heavy ground swell. There is a report in camp today, which from its source is entitled to some credit, that a detachment of eighty volunteers with Cassius M. Clay and two majors, whose names I do not know, has been captured near Saltillo. . . .

*February 5.* The Eighth Infantry left for the mouth of the river this morning. My old friend, Colonel N. S. Clarke, has joined his regiment and assumed command of the camp. We are informed by an order that but little transportation will be furnished after leaving the vessels so that we must reduce our baggage to the minimum. The design evidently is to push us lightly equipped and in the most rapid manner in pursuit of the enemy, in the hope of finding him unprepared, — a vain expectation in my opinion. I believe Santa

Anna knows well what we are doing, and I shall be agreeably surprised if we do not meet a large army in the neighborhood of Vera Cruz. Neither do I believe San Juan or the city will fall without a desperate resistance, nor do I believe the Mexicans will make peace with us when we have taken those places. Two months will show. Hope and pray for the best. . . . There is confirmation today of the reported capture of C. M. Clay. The two majors were Gaines and Borland of the Kentucky cavalry. The disaster occurred at a spot called Encarnacion. They were entirely surrounded and did not fire a gun.

*February 6.* Today the report has a new phase. It is said that Clay and Gaines are not prisoners, — only Major Borland is with a much smaller party than at first reported. You will think I only make statements one day to contradict them the next, but Dame Rumor leads us astray and I only record each night what I believe. Young Ritchie of our regiment, whose sad fate I have mentioned, was a most amiable youth. The particulars of his death have reached us today. With his escort of Dragoons he arrived at a small place called Villa Rosa, halted his party in the skirt of the village, and alone (dreadful imprudence) went in for refreshments. After supping, he left the house and had proceeded but a few steps when a lasso was thrown over his head, he was drawn into a yard and killed with his own sword. His body was found



a day or two after by Captain Graham of the Dragoons. . . .

*February 8.* The Fourth Infantry under Colonel Garland left here this morning and will probably embark at Brasos tomorrow. We have not been notified who will go next, — if it is our regiment we shall leave early in the morning as we hear several ships are now in the offing. General Scott has been much annoyed at the delay. The vessels ought all to have been here more than a fortnight ago. Such an error may possibly defeat the entire object of the expedition, be it what it may, for none of us know with certainty, though it is evident that dispatch and surprise are among its principal elements. The weather is now delightfully warm. Merrill and I took a fine swim in the river before dinner. Can you realize amid your frost and snow that I am bathing without discomfort in the Rio Grande? . . . Nearly three weeks delay here must be enough to madden General Scott. Corporal Riley of my company lost his youngest child this morning, about a year old. I went to his tent before noon and found the mother, an excellent little woman whom he married at Dearborn Arsenal, sitting with her dead baby in her lap, the tears quietly dropping on its face. . . . A ridiculous story is in the *Matamoras Flag* of today that Santa Anna and Arista have had a quarrel in which Santa Anna was killed. I mention it as it will be

quoted in the newspapers. It is undoubtedly all "buncombe." . . . We have just heard that a transport having on board four companies of Louisiana volunteers has been wrecked below Tampico. It is feared that they have been taken prisoners and Colonel De Renssy with them. Thus this expedition has begun in delay and disaster. I trust it is no type of its ending. . . .

*February 14.* The order to embark came this evening. Our heavy baggage is on board the boat which will take us to the mouth of the river, our camp breaks up at daylight. As we are the last detachment we shall probably get on board our transport by day after tomorrow, and proceed at once to the rendezvous at Lobos. . . .

*February 15.* Our camp broke up at three o'clock this morning and in the good steamer "Rough and Ready" we reached this place, Boca del Rio Grande, at eleven in the morning. Our camp is pitched upon the seashore, the ever beating surf in all its beauty is scattering its foam over the beach within a few feet of my tent, while over the broad Gulf as far as the eye can reach are anchored vessels of every size, from the light schooner, with its raking masts, to the mighty man-of-war whose heavy spars and black hull are barely visible as they roll on the main far out at sea. About us are the tents of more than two thousand troops, light artillery, cavalry, rifles, infantry,

all bound for the great scene towards which we are looking with anxiety.

*February 16.* Last night I had no idea we would leave Boca del Rio for twenty-four hours, but I was roused after a restless night at an early hour this morning by Major Scott's orderly, and on reporting to the Major I was informed that the regiment was to march to Brasos Santiago and that as the transport ship designated for the Fifth would carry but four hundred rank and file, the remainder were to be left to compose a portion of a battalion to be formed from the *disjecta membra* of the army. I declined the honor, and remonstrated against being detailed to command this portion, and Scott <sup>1</sup> insisted. I referred the matter to the next higher authority, Colonel Harvey, stating that if it was a higher command than that ordinarily bestowed upon a captain, it belonged to Merrill, the acting major of the regiment, and if less than a captain's command, Major Scott had no right to degrade me, that from the roster it could not be my detail as I was last on detached service — commanding the escort from Camargo to Monterey. It was decided in my favor, and Rossell was detailed for the service. We marched at two in the afternoon. Our route lay immediately on the beach each wave dashing around our ankles as we moved over the damp sand on the margin. We crossed Boca Chico,

<sup>1</sup> Major Martin Scott, Fifth Infantry.

the strait which separates Brasos St. Iago from the mainland, on a foot bridge carrying our baggage by hand and reloading in other teams on the other side. This was a tedious and laborious process detaining us two hours. The whole march was nine miles and we arrived at Brasos St. Iago just at sunset. We are to embark early in the morning, if there is no norther, on the ship "Huron," seven hundred tons, which is anchored some five or six miles seaward. We heard this evening from Tampico Colonel De Renssy with his little battalion escaped from General Coz who surrounded him with a large force after his shipwreck. Colonel De Renssy held the Mexicans at bay, though the arms of his troops, if they had any, must have been unserviceable, and at night, leaving large camp fires, gave them the slip arriving by a forced march safely at Tampico. . . . There is a report tonight that General Taylor has had a severe fight, the particulars and result not known. . . .

CAMP AT BRASOS ST. IAGO,  
February 17, 1847.

I closed my letter yesterday just after our arrival at this place. After writing, I went to an oyster house with my second lieutenant, Farrelly, where we took as many of the natives as was convenient. They were excellent and were a real treat after the hard bread and pork on which we have been regaling for months. This morning at daylight we struck our tents and

prepared to embark immediately. The wind rose, however, before the lighters were ready for us, and we again encamped. I was sent to Point Isabel with a few men to search for deserters. I had a pleasant sail in a small sloop, found Dr. Wood there in fine health, and old ——, bewigged and as complimentary as of yore, transacted my business and returned by two in the afternoon to Brasos.

This large Depot is now the scene of the most utter confusion imaginable. Quarter-masters, wagon-masters, wharf-masters and government agents of all descriptions running about as if mad, while orders upon orders and counter-orders are constantly issued. An exemplification of a scene in "Charles O'Malley." Enter sergeant with a large bundle of papers under each arm.

*Officer:* What have you under your right arm?

*Sergeant:* Orders.

*Officer:* And what under your left?

*Sergeant:* Counter-orders.

*February 18.* The regiment got off in two steamers, the "Anson" and "Augusta" and before three in the afternoon were on board the ship "Huron," which was at anchor some eight miles at sea. We are all much disappointed in our vessel. She is much smaller and worse found than we anticipated. She was prepared for only two hundred and eighty-eight men and fourteen officers, whereas four hundred men and

twenty-one officers have been put on board. Everything is much crowded and the accommodations totally inadequate. Fortunately, it is very calm, and we hope to get things stowed tomorrow so as to make all more comfortable. The ship under the command of Captain N. G. Weeks was got under way about four in the afternoon. There was a light north wind, and she stood upon her course south southeast for Lobos. Notwithstanding that the sea was smooth and I could not perceive that the vessel rolled at all, many were very sick and were "casting up their accounts" in a manner by no means agreeable.

*February 19.* We have thus far been fanned along by gentle breezes. About noon the wind came ahead, blowing from the southeast, changing our course to east by north half north. Our table on board is very good — in every other respect we are exceedingly uncomfortable, much crowded, the men terribly so. I fear the worst consequences should we be long on board in this climate. Scott, Merrill, Ruggles, Rosenkrantz, and some others suffer much from sea sickness. I, you know, am exempt from that affliction. I pass nearly all my time on deck reading, the captain having quite a supply of books. I am by hours the last at night to leave the deck; seated alone on the taffrail I gaze upon the beautiful moon and stars or down into the sparkling sea. . . .

*February 22.* At six this morning, when I awoke, everything was pitching about, the ship rolling at a

terrible rate. By dead reckoning the captain estimated that we were in the latitude of Lobos. I found on coming on deck that we were heading west. At eleven in the morning the low sandy shore of Mexico came in view. I climbed to the masthead with the captain to con the shore. I am the only officer on board enough of a *sailor* to undertake this feat. I often go to the top to avoid the sickness and confusion of the deck. We lay over the fore top-gallant yard more than an hour, nearly one hundred feet from the deck, while the good ship was flying over the sea urged by half a gale of wind. The shore became every moment more distinct and soon the Island of Lobos appeared with its fleet of transports. We stood away to the south and at about noon we were about six miles from the Island, when from my position I could see that the vessels belonging to the navy were firing the national salute for Washington's birthday. At two in the afternoon we dropped our anchor among a large fleet of ships rolling in the heavy sea, near the "Massachusetts," on board of which are General Scott and staff. The little Isle of Lobos looks like a green speck gemming the bosom of the ocean. It is in fact but a mile in length, and half a mile in breadth, and affords but a poor lea in a norther, the only gales which we are likely to encounter here. Its beach is now covered with the tents of various volunteer regiments.

*February 23.* This morning the weather is mild, the sea running down. I went on board the "Massachusetts" where I found Uncle Edmund in fine spirits and merry as ever. He thinks there will be no fight at Vera Cruz. *Nous verrons.* General Scott is in high spirits, talking in his usual vein.

*February 25.* Today a sad accident happened on board. A block fell from masthead, knocking down three men and mortally wounding Leach of my company. Since one o'clock he has been insensible and I think will not last till morning.

*February 26.* Leach died during the night and I was ordered to go ashore and select a spot for his grave, but there was such a gale blowing from the north, that it was not practicable to land. All day the transports have been arriving, coming down before the gale like race horses. The First, Second, and Seventh Infantry from Tampico are here. In the afternoon the wind having lulled a little, I landed with a small party to dig a grave, and after selecting a suitable spot I walked about the Island which I found covered, except where the volunteers had cleared it, with a dense growth of tropical trees and plants, most of which I had never seen before. The caoutchouc or India rubber tree grows here and is the most wonderful vegetable production I have ever seen, answering exactly the description of the banyan, its long heavy horizontal branches throwing down vertical ones



which take root in the earth, the whole broad mass of branches and foliage being supported by this natural colonnade like the dome of a cathedral. On my way back to the ship I visited many vessels in search of my brother and met many old friends. At last I found Edmund on board a little brig with Colonel Plympton, and he is now spending the evening with me on board the "Huron." He is in fine health and spirits.

*February 27.* The gale still continues. I have, however, been this morning on the "Massachusetts," and have learned that an express vessel is to leave for New Orleans as soon as the wind shifts. I am, therefore, about to close these pages, perchance the last you will receive before I land at Anton Lizardo, or San Juan. We are confidently assured by officers of the navy that they can so cover our landing that we will receive no opposition from the Mexicans. This being the case, I think, although we may have a tedious siege and some hard work in the trenches, there is little to be feared for the result. . . . We shall probably sail for Anton Lizardo or Sacrificio within a week. It is exceedingly inconvenient writing here. Not only is the ship crowded beyond description, but she is pitching in a heavy sea. . . .

SHIP "HURON" OFF LOBOS,  
February 28, 1847.

. . . In my last I spoke of the little Isle of Lobos, which lies in latitude  $21^{\circ} 26'$ . This little gem of the

ocean, hitherto only known to pirates and solitary cruisers in the Gulf, will now have its fame widely blown over the United States. It is about seven miles from the main and has been created by the gradual rise of the coral reef which spreads on every side of it, and is near the surface to the east and west for at least a mile. Besides the caoutchouc tree, wild oranges, lemons, and limes are growing on this little spot, and are now opening their sweet blossoms, filling the evening air with delicious fragrance. Some curious specimens of coral have been collected by the volunteer officers encamped on the island, such as coralized wood, bulbous roots, lemons, and oranges, astonishingly perfect. The smallpox having broken out on a transport ship, the Island where the sick are placed has been quarantined by order of General Scott, or I should make search for something for a memento. . . .

*March 2.* This morning with the captain of the ship and Lieutenant Myers I went fishing at daylight in a small boat. It was raining when we started but when the sun rose the weather cleared. We dropped our little anchor off the breakers of the east reef in about twenty fathoms and prepared our lines for sport, but finding it necessary almost immediately to shift our ground, we endeavored to raise our anchor but to our great disappointment found it fast tangled in the coral. It resisted all our efforts and finally the cable parted and we were obliged to pull back to the ship.

. . . After breakfast we saw a signal from the mainmast of the "Massachusetts" for an officer and a boat from each ship, and an order was communicated to make all sail for Anton Lizardo. The wind was very light and dead ahead, but the *steamers* on board which are the Generals and their staffs paddled off to the southeast and were soon out of sight. In the afternoon the wind rose, when as if by magic this large fleet spread their sails to the breeze and stood away close hauled upon the wind to the southwest. I went to masthead to gaze upon this glorious spectacle, one which few men ever see, such as I never expect to look upon again. . . .

*March 4.* The wind shifted to the north at two o'clock this morning and is blowing a cracking breeze. We are crowding sail and are gradually passing most of the fleet. We are at noon eighty miles from San Juan. At two in the afternoon we saw the high mountains to the northwest of Vera Cruz. There were nineteen sail in sight all crowding on to the scene of action. The beautiful little Nautilus are scudding by us in numbers, their tiny sails hoisted and their variegated colors glistening in the bright sun. Query? Are they too going to war, or like Columbus, on a voyage of discovery, or thus dressed in holiday suits in the service of some sea Venus?

*March 5.* This morning there was a dead calm, at eight a very faint breeze fanned us slowly along.

About nine we saw the high peak of Orizaba looking like a point of burnished silver in the sky. Its summit more than three miles in height covered with eternal snows is the first object which meets the eye of the mariner as he approaches Vera Cruz. It lies between forty and fifty miles inland and looks as little like a mountain when first seen as possible, for it could not be distinguished from a cloud reflecting the sun did it not remain immovable and unchangeable in shape. I went to the head of the foremast, and lay over the fore topsail yard until in the dim distance the castle of San Juan and the city could be seen. Some shipping, probably English and French men-of-war, are lying at anchor in the roadstead of Sacrificios. It is eleven in the morning and before night we shall be at anchor at Anton Lizardo. We are near the scene of our struggle and 'tis strange that all doubt and misgiving seems to leave my mind as the place and time comes near, and though I am as likely to be killed in the coming conflict as any other — it does not so seem to me. A celebrated author says: "All men think all men mortal but themselves, themselves immortal."

*March 6.* As we drew towards the anchorage at Anton Lizardo yesterday we found ourselves in the midst of a fleet of ships and steamers. I counted over sixty vessels including the men-of-war (two tall ships and a war steamer) which are keeping up the blockade of the castle, their tapering spars plainly visible traced

on the bright blue sky. We dropped our anchor about four o'clock, just inside the reef which forms the harbor. We were in the rear and far from our chief, General Worth. A steamer soon came alongside to take us to our proper position. She had just left the blockade at Vera Cruz and brought us most interesting news — Santa Anna's official report of his battle with General Taylor at Buena Vista. He admits enough to show that he has been well whipped, though he claims a victory, and strangely enough says he is about to *retreat* to Agua Nueva. It must have been a bloody and desperately contested action lasting through two days, the twenty-second and twenty-third of February. You will undoubtedly see the accounts from General Taylor long before we shall here. I am exceedingly anxious to hear from Webster,<sup>1</sup> who, you know, was there. We also heard by the steamer that the castle of San Juan and the city are manned by less than five thousand soldiers and but badly supplied with provisions. We shall probably have no difficulty in taking the place. This morning I called on Uncle Edmund and spoke to my brother as I passed his ship. They are both well and in fine spirits. We see occasionally a few Mexican Dragoons riding on the beach opposite our position. As they are nearly three miles off they do not appear very

<sup>1</sup> His brother-in-law, who survived the war, Lieutenant-Colonel Lucien B. Webster.

warlike. The coast shows no signs of habitation in our neighborhood. If the ordnance and horses were here, I suppose we should land immediately — they are constantly expected and we cannot long be delayed.

This morning Generals Scott, Patterson, Worth, and Pillow, with their staff, went in the small steamer, "Secretary," captured from the Mexicans, to reconnoitre the castle and city. They had been gone some hours and were near San Juan when we saw the flash and soon heard the deep sound of the heavy guns of the castle. They had approached within gunshot and were fired upon. Ten shells and one solid shot were thrown at them before they were out of range. The stupidity of the enemy alone saved them. The enemy should have used their entire water battery and thrown solid shot alone, opening on the boat when nearest and they must have sunk it, — but they waited until she was going off and then with no effect sent only the eleven shot spoken of. . . .

*March 7.* It is rumored that we are to commence our landing tonight — I doubt it. It is now four in the afternoon and the adjutant has gone to General Worth for orders. . . . The enemy have been driving cattle into the city, evidently preparing for a siege. . . . The adjutant has returned with the order for us to land at break of day from the war ship "Raritan." The point of debarkation is three or four miles below

the city, opposite to the Island of Sacrificios. What awaits us on shore is all conjecture. It is not probable, however, that our landing will be opposed, as the enemy cannot be aware of the point or concentrate a force there. . . . We are to carry nothing with us but a great coat, a haversack with four days' provisions in it, and a canteen of water. . . . Now, hurrah for San Juan and a brevet ! I have written this with all the officers about me talking like mad to each other and to me. Major Scott says: " Give my best respects to your wife, and tell her we are going on the Flagship and shall take the first battery ! "

CAMP WASHINGTON, NEAR VERA CRUZ,  
March 13, 1847.

. . . We did not land as we expected, on the morning of the eighth, as we were threatened with a norther, but remained at our anchorage. On the ninth the weather proving mild, the movement commenced at daylight. The First Brigade were mostly transferred to armed vessels; near two thousand to the Flagship " Raritan," including a portion of our regiment and my company. The steamers took the vessels in tow, and all started for the Island of Sacrificios, dropping our anchors about noon between that island and the main. Sacrificios is about twelve hundred yards from the shore where there is a good landing, three miles from the city and the castle, just beyond cannon range.

We could see a few Mexican soldiers on shore, but no evidence of any large force to oppose our landing, though we did not know but there might be batteries and troops behind the sand hills. Our division as rapidly as possible debarked in the surf boats, and were ranged in order of battle about a quarter of a mile from the beach awaiting the signal to move to the shore. This was an interesting moment, and must have been a grand spectacle from the yards and tops of the shipping. Soon a cannon was fired at headquarters, the steamer "Massachusetts," and with loud cheers we pushed for the beach, each hardy sailor using his utmost exertion to be the first to land. The entire division reached the shore in good order, every one leaping from the boats as their keels grated on the sand, wading the short distance that remained. We were at once formed in order of battle and advanced over the sand hills. We met with no opposition, not a single gun being fired. As we gained the crest of the hill, we could see a few Mexicans, but they were far off and not in force. It was near sunset when we gained our position. The boats returned immediately to bring the second line, composed of Patterson's division, the third being Twigg's brigade. As the night closed in we lay down on the sand, every alternate company remaining up to prevent surprise. About two o'clock I was roused from a deep sleep by the cry "To Arms," and the rattle of musketry on



our right where there was apparently a smart skirmish. I was at once ordered with my company in front as a picket. I forced my way through the chaparral and over the broken ground, some three or four hundred yards to the front, where I took up a position that overlooked the country in advance. The firing had ceased and we were not again molested during the night. At daylight I was recalled and ordered to the right of the brigade as one company of a battalion of skirmishers under Captain C. F. Smith. The battalion is composed of four companies, and I am acting as major of the command. We shall probably remain detached from our regiment during the siege. Our movement for investing the city began on the morning of the tenth. We, the skirmishers, were thrown forward to feel the ground. We could see about a quarter of a mile in front some two or three hundred Mexican soldiers, and a squadron or two of cavalry in the valley. We exchanged some shots without effect, though the escopet balls whistled over our heads. A few Congreve rockets were thrown at them and a shell or two from a mountain howitzer, — upon which they retreated. The position of Worth's division is on the right or south of the town, its right flank resting on the sea. Our line of investment will extend a mile or so from the shore. From Worth's left flank the line is to be kept up by Pillow's Brigade, and so on to the left where the Third Brigade under

Twiggs is to rest on the sea to the north of the city. By noon on the tenth, Worth had occupied his position and General Patterson's division, composed of Pillow's, Shield's, and Quitman's Brigades, marched to the left to continue the line of investment. Pillow's command was soon engaged with the enemy as we knew by the continued firing from them. We learned in the evening that they had gained their position without loss. The New York regiment occupied a large magazine in rear of Patterson's division. During the day, the enemy were throwing solid shot and shells from their heavy guns and mortars which generally fell short, though some reached the line causing a little beautiful dodging and much laughter. As the night closed in we bivouacked. On the eleventh the troops of General Patterson's division were still moving to the left, while the First (General Worth's) were engaged in reconnoitring and getting some of our camp equipage and provisions on shore. I saw Colonel Plympton and Edmund in the evening, both well. The Colonel has grown old since you saw him and I think is breaking, though his conversation is as lively and entertaining as ever. On the twelfth, Twiggs moved with his brigade to the left, having to fight much of his route, with some loss. Captain Alburtis of the Second Infantry was killed by a round shot which carried away his head as he was sitting under a tree. The same shot took off the leg of a

corporal and wounded a third person. Lieutenant Colonel Dickinson of the South Carolina regiment and five or six men of the rifles were wounded. The enemy in these skirmishes must have suffered considerably, — a Mexican officer bearing dispatches to the Capital was among their killed. I was out all the night of the twelfth in command of two companies in the hope of intercepting a reënforcement, supposed to be coming in from Alvarado.

I was interrupted here by an order for the light battalion to take two days' provisions in their haversacks and advance to drive in the enemy's outposts, and if possible to get position in the suburbs. I have been gone two days, but will take up my story where I left it.

On the morning of the thirteenth, I returned from my picket on the Alvarado road, and we heard in the course of the day that the investment was completed. The weather is extremely disagreeable, a north wind blowing violently, nearly burying us in sand and preventing all communication with the ships. We regret very much that we cannot get our mortars and heavy guns on shore until there is a calm, as little can be done here until our batteries are in position. Duncan's light battalion and the Dragoons have not yet arrived and some anxiety is felt for their fate. We on shore were much disgusted at seeing a ship under French colors run the misnamed blockade carrying

succor to the enemy, without the least apparent effort to intercept them from the navy, which were quietly lying at anchor. The armed steamers ought and could easily capture any vessel attempting to enter Vera Cruz. The gentlemen of the navy say it is entirely the fault of Commodore Connor and complain bitterly of the inactivity in which they are kept. On the fourteenth, in the morning, I was interrupted as I before stated, while trying to give you some account of what is going on. In compliance with the order spoken of, our battalion was soon in motion and by cutting our way through dense chaparral and by keeping under the sand hills we advanced a mile toward the city without being seen from it or the castle. I was here placed in a small indentation in the top of a sand hill in command of two companies, which were a reserve, and designed to support any advance parties which might be attacked. Here we remained twenty-four hours drenched with rain and nearly buried in the driving sand. Save the excitement of the whizzing of some passing ball (designed for our friends in the rear) whose flight we watched with some anxiety, there was nothing to relieve the monotony of our position. We were much fatigued on the morning of the fifteenth, when General Worth came to our position and ordered us to advance. We proceeded very cautiously in a small path which had been cut through the bushes advancing very gradu-

ally wherever we came to a place where there was any danger of being seen from the city. We soon came upon our advanced party under C. F. Smith, who were lying at the base of a hill among some very ancient tombs. — I must be more brief. — Captain Walker was thrown forward with his company to a large cemetery near the wall of the city, and I was ordered to remain about two hundred yards in his rear to support him in case he was attacked. While lying with my company in this place prostrate upon the ground, the enemy amused themselves by throwing shells at us, only two of which struck near us, — one exploded a few yards to our left, and one struck about fifteen feet to my right, and rolled out of the hole very near Rossell and myself. We lay very close to the ground some minutes waiting for it to burst. Then I went and examined it and found very fortunately for us that the fuse had been broken off by its striking the ground. Towards night Walker thought himself threatened by cavalry from the city, and I advanced to his assistance. It was, however, only a small reconnoitring party which soon retired. The cemetery where we are stationed is a large rectangular enclosure surrounded by a high brick wall. In its centre is a chapel surmounted by a graceful dome. We were unable to advance beyond this point without being exposed to the direct fire of the enemy's batteries. It rained nearly all night and by morning we

were all pretty well worn out by two nights' picket duty. We were relieved about dawn on the sixteenth by the Fifth Infantry under Major Scott, and returned to camp dirty, wet, cold, and hungry. I found myself covered with wood ticks and red bugs, and although for more than twenty-four hours I have constantly applied salt ammonia and oil, I am covered with inflamed blotches from head to foot. We received today particulars of Taylor's great but bloody victory.

*March 17.* . . . The siege progresses slowly owing to the equinoctial storm which prevents the landing of our mortars and ordnance. The investment, however, is complete and I do not think the enemy can communicate with the interior. Several of their expresses have been intercepted, in all of which they speak of the great terror of the inhabitants and of their want of provisions. I think when our batteries are established we shall make short work of it, and without much danger to ourselves as we shall only be exposed to their vertical fire, that is shell, which are not very destructive. Bob T—— is here, master of the "Princeton." I have seen him once — he is a fine, manly sailor, and I understand has abandoned all the wild habits of his boyhood. The mail goes by the "Alabama" in the morning, and I must close this rude letter which, bad and imperfect as it is, has cost me no little trouble under all the disad-

vantages for writing which I have had to encounter. I shall write as usual when I can, but my details must be very imperfect as I am confined by duty to my own brigade. The left flank, where Edmund is, is several miles from us. *Not a word I write must get into the papers. . . .*

CAMP WASHINGTON, AROUND VERA CRUZ,  
March 22, 1847.

My last date was the seventeenth. Since then have had no time to continue my journal, but all I could have recorded of interest can be told in a few words. The siege has progressed slowly and neither party has as yet injured the other materially. The first parallel has been opened about eight hundred yards from the wall of the town. The point of attack being directly in front of us, our brigade, General Worth's, has performed most of the labor in the trenches, and furnished nearly all the guards for the working parties. I have been on picket guard six nights in eleven, and the duty has been exceedingly severe upon all. The sand insects and want of rest must soon break us down in this climate unless the duty becomes lighter. The enemy are using their heavy batteries incessantly, throwing some hundreds of solid shot and shells at us every day, yet but one man in our brigade has been struck, a marine, who was killed yesterday morning by a shot striking the wall of the cemetery behind which he was sitting. We owe our safety to

the peculiar nature of the ground, all the distance from our camp to the trenches being a succession of high sand hills with valleys filled with chaparral in which we are entirely safe from all but vertical shot, the fragments of shells which burst in the air, and the chances are that not one in a thousand of them will be effective.

Night before last I spent in advance of the trenches not far from the town. It was blowing a gale from the north, the fine sand pricking our faces like needles and nearly putting out our eyes. Being the advance post, and very near the enemy, great watchfulness was necessary to prevent surprise. I was up all the previous night and day, and yesterday at noon when I returned to camp, I was completely exhausted. A good night's rest, however, has restored me and I am ready for the trenches again. We have not yet opened a single battery on the town or castle and last night we got our first mortars and guns into position. But a small portion of our battering train has reached here and much anxiety is felt in regard to it, — whether it has been lost at sea or blown to leeward is not known. Forty-nine ten-inch mortars were expected of which but ten have arrived, and of the breaching guns only four twenty-four-pounders and two sixty-four-pound howitzers. With these it is thought we can soon reduce the city, but the castle may stand a longer siege. The horses of the light



batteries and those of the Dragoons have suffered a great loss by the sea voyage, — Duncan having lost fifty, and a squadron of Dragoons under Colonel Harney one hundred and fifteen, and those horses which have been landed are scarcely fit for service. . . .

Our army is in no danger from severe fevers until May, and before then I hope our work will be done, and we shall either return or go to the mountains. . . . At two in the afternoon today, the city and castle were summoned to surrender, which, of course, was declined in the usual courteous terms by General Morales, Governor of Vera Cruz and San Juan, and commander of the Mexican forces, and at half-past three o'clock six of our ten-inch mortars opened on the city with terrible effect. At the same time two small war steamers and five gun boats with heavy guns came to anchor within range of the castle to assist us in the attack. The enemy replied with every gun which they could bring to bear, returning at least three shots for every one of ours. It was a sublime spectacle from the sand hills in front of our camp where I was standing with Belton. The cannonade was terrific and the city and trenches were soon completely hidden by the smoke. We know that our shells must be doing vast injury as every one exploded in or immediately over the devoted city, and at the same time we felt confident that but little damage could be done to our troops in the trenches

where they are covered from direct fire and are on the circumference of a circle, while our fire is concentrated from that circumference on a centre. We were, however, anxious to hear from the advance where were four companies of the Fifth under Major Scott. Chapman's company and mine were resting after having been forty-eight hours on duty.

At nine our regiment came in, when we learned that, as we supposed, we had silenced many of the Mexican guns, and as could be seen from the advanced positions had done great execution, knocking the spires, domes, and houses to ruins. If our weak battery of six mortars has done so much, what must have been the result if all our guns — say fifty mortars and twenty or thirty heavy siege cannon, which should have been here — had all been in operation. I do not believe the enemy could have held out four hours.

The loss on our side was but one soldier killed, but the entire army are mourning the death of Captain John R. Vinton, one of the most intellectual and gallant spirits of the army. He commanded the batteries in the trenches and a shell passing through the parapet of the parallel struck him in the head killing him instantly. Is it not strange that of the six or seven, which is all who have fallen in the siege, two should have been officers, Vinton and Alburtis?

On the morning of the twenty-third, I was ordered to the trenches with a working party of one hundred

men. A violent norther had arisen during the night, which blew the sand back almost as fast as we threw it out. The enemy were firing but little, occasionally a small shell would drop near us, but we could always see it in time to get out of its way. Our batteries, too, were obliged to slacken their fire as the surf during the gale prevented any landing from the ships, and the shells brought on shore were nearly expended. No one on our side has been wounded since the fall of Vinton. I came back to camp last night, filthy and tired enough. A good night's sleep has restored me and I am besides cheered to hear that eighteen more mortars have arrived. The more we get, the sooner our work will be finished and the less injury we shall receive.

I have just seen Uncle Edmund who says the "Princeton," war steamer, is about to sail for New York with Commodore Connor, who has been relieved by Commodore Perry. I hasten to close this for her mail and think it quite possible you may receive this before the last which went in a sail vessel on the seventeenth. I haven't seen my brother for several days, but hear that he is well. I am most thankful that Webster's name is not, so far as we can learn, on the list of the wounded at Buena Vista. Wherever there is shade and soil here, there are many beautiful wild flowers in blossom. I shall send one in this letter. . . .

CAMP WASHINGTON, VERA CRUZ,  
March 24, 1847.

The date above was written when I closed my last letter which is still on the "Princeton" and will not leave until tomorrow, so you will get several letters at one time, and I hope in so great an amount of scribblings you will find sufficient news to compensate for the labor of hunting out of the mass.

It is now the *twenty-ninth, Sunday, nine o'clock at night*. I have just come in from a picket tour of three days and two nights at the Puente Moreno, which is some six miles in the country, where on the twenty-fifth there was a smart skirmish in which we were, of course, victorious, though at the expense of some few killed and Lieutenant Neal and two or three privates wounded. I am almost tired to death and would not write another word was my news of less importance. The bombardment of the city continued until the evening of the twenty-sixth when it ceased, much to the amazement of all who were not in the secrets of our chief. Something was in the wind, but *what*, was all conjecture, and so continued when on the morning of the twenty-sixth I was ordered on picket. The wind was blowing a gale (you will think it is all wind here, but there is a goodly sprinkling of *sand*), my tent had just been blown down, not only down, but in pieces, and the few articles which I possess here had been scattered about and buried in the sand. I, how-

ever, headed my company and left everything to its fate, marching with two other companies, all under command of Major Sumner.

I was glad enough to get into the green country away from the sand hills. We made ourselves as comfortable as we could in our position, bivouacking on the bridge. Most of the night Sumner and myself spent in conjecture, and in discussing the probable causes of the strange silence of our batteries. On the twenty-seventh we heard from camp that it was owing to a flag received from the city with some proposals from the Mexican general, which a commission was discussing. We presumed it only related to the surrender of the city and at one o'clock at night a Dragoon rode into our bivouac with a note from Colonel Hitchcock saying that General Scott had just approved the Articles of Capitulation. Huzza! Huzza! the city and the strong castle of San Juan have surrendered! Tomorrow, the thirtieth, the garrisons of both places are to march out, and our flag to float in place of the Mexican. The Mexican officers are to retain their side-arms, the rank and file to march without arms, and all to go into the interior on parole. Our brigade, General Worth's, are to meet them at the gates and take possession of the city and castle when they leave them. This is a great victory accomplished with little loss on our side, three officers and some ten men only having been killed. Five generals, eighteen colonels,

etc., and between four and five thousand rank and file of the enemy become prisoners on parole. We possess the strongest place in Mexico. About three hundred cannon of all calibres, with all the arms, munitions of war and public property, undoubtedly worth some millions, are ours.

We hear the distress in the city has been dreadful, some hundreds of women and children having been killed by our shells. This is horrible! I have this moment been notified that with my company I am to garrison Fort St. Iago, a small work on the south-east of the town. By the mail tonight I have received two letters from you but am too much worn out to answer them. I have been nine nights and days out of eighteen on picket, a considerable part of the time under the fire of the Mexican batteries and can scarcely see the paper, I would not read over this letter for anything! . . .

CAMP WASHINGTON,  
April 6, 1847.

My last was closed on the twenty-eighth ultimo. Before now reports of our glorious success here with glowing accounts of the ceremonies of the surrender on the morning of the twenty-ninth are speeding their way to Washington and the world, and it would be useless for me to attempt a repetition of what you will find detailed so much better in the newspapers. However, as the "Magnanimous Mexican Army"

moved out of the city, we marched in. My company of the Fifth and an artillery company moved off to the southeast corner of the town to occupy Fort St. Iago where the first flag of our country which ever floated over the walls of Vera Cruz was raised by Major Martin Scott who was in command.

As it was run up we fired a national salute from the twenty-four-pounders which garnished the fort. The navy followed with a tremendous roar of artillery from every gun in the fleet.

Colonel Belton raised a flag and fired a salute from San Juan D'Ulloa, as did the officer in command at Fort Concepcion at the opposite corner of the town.

WHERE CAMP WASHINGTON ONCE WAS,  
NEAR VERA CRUZ,  
April 17, 1847.

I do not know the date of my last letter, a short history will explain the cause. On the night of the seventh, I was writing a letter to you in my tent, when, in common with the other officers of the regiment, I was summoned to Major Scott's tent. Scott was swelling with importance and had borrowed a candle from the adjutant, being too poor to purchase. He held in his hand a note and commenced:

"Are you all here?" then began reading the note:

"Major Scott, Sir: You" — a pause.

"Where is Captain Ruggles? Gentlemen, pay attention, we shall catch it before tomorrow night!"

Myself: "What ! the yellow fever ?"

Major Scott: "We are to go on desperate service."

And so after beginning and stopping twenty times he finally managed to read a brief note from General Worth ordering him with the regiment to report to him on the morning of the eighth at daylight in the plaza, each one carrying in his haversack five days' provisions and his greatcoat on his back. I asked Scott if he knew where we were going. "He thought he did, we would all find out before tomorrow night but some would not live to tell of it if he led them !" etc., intimating that we were going on desperate service for which we were selected in consequence of his superior abilities, etc. I finally remarked that I thought he knew nothing about it, and that I would bet we were going after horses and mules, — in consequence of his peculiar fitness.

I went to my tent and closed my desk, in which there were besides all your dear letters a considerable amount of money belonging to the regiment and to the men, and carried it to Major Kirby, as I dared not leave it in my tent during my absence. On my return last night we found the army all gone. Uncle had carried my desk with him not liking to leave it with any one, knowing its contents, — so I am without my dressing and writing apparatus.

To resume. I had guessed right in regard to our duty. On reporting on the morning of the eighth, we



were ordered on board the steamer "McKim" to go up the Alvarado River after horses and mules. We arrived at Alvarado, which is near the mouth of the river, just at sunset. Here is a fine harbor with about two fathoms on the bar at low water, and it is a much better point for a large city and a commercial depot than at Vera Cruz. The town which before the war contained between three and four thousand inhabitants is now in the possession of our navy, Captain Mayo being the Governor. It is much like other Mexican towns, — a large church, a few decent houses owned by the rich, the residue mean and dirty, filled with ticks, fleas, vermin, idleness, and licentiousness. In the morning we proceeded up the river which is truly beautiful — broad, deep, and clear, with rich verdant banks.

About thirty miles from its mouth we arrived at the town of Tlacatalpin. Here the river forks the left branch taking the name of San Juan. Tlacatalpin is much the neatest town I have yet seen in Mexico, containing some three thousand inhabitants who are industrious in comparison with all others I have seen in this country. The women have the reputation of being virtuous, the men honest. They are at least half white, being less stained with negro blood than in those portions of Mexico which I have seen. Many cocoanut trees in full bearing were growing here, some ripe pineapples, indeed, most of the tropical fruits,

excepting oranges. We found a great abundance of melons, green corn, cabbages, and some Irish potatoes which were tolerable. The quarter-master found it would be some days before he could get horses in from the surrounding country, so we left the steamboat and were quartered in a house for picking cotton. It was very dirty, of course, but it gave the men room to lie down in the shade which is absolutely necessary in this hot climate. The weather was *awfully* hot. We had no change of clothes and you can judge how uncomfortable and disgusting we were in a few days. We remained at Tlacatalpin from Friday until Tuesday evening. The march from that place to Vera Cruz was most horrible, — the men without bread, and had to be up all night watching the horses. We have just arrived. I am completely worn out and have just seen the *villainous* order of promotions and brevets in which the Fifth is entirely neglected. I am utterly disgusted with the service and were it not for you and the dear children would resign at once, but for your sakes I must continue to endure.

Santa Anna with fifteen thousand men is, we learn, strongly fortified in a mountain pass about forty miles from here. It is supposed General Scott fought him yesterday, as cannon were heard. We all think it will be the last fight of the war as Santa Anna has his ministers with him evidently to negotiate, if he is beaten.

*April 19.* . . . We are to march this evening or at daybreak tomorrow.

JALAPA,  
April 25, 1847.

I wrote from Vera Cruz on the nineteenth, just before we marched for this place. We were then nearly worn out with fatigue and started in bad spirits. Indeed the treatment which the army has received from the Administration, and the injustice done by the brevets, has disgusted and dispirited many of us, particularly in our regiment, which has done so much service and been so entirely overlooked. . . . I have recently been less regular in my correspondence than I desire to be, but I have been so situated that I could not even write a journal. We carry no baggage but a pair of saddle bags and a small roll of bedding and are without tents. I am now sitting on the ground writing on the top of a box. . . . We are to march to Perote, forty miles from here, tomorrow, to join General Worth, to whose division we belong. As I told you in my last we made our preparations to leave Vera Cruz on the nineteenth. . . . Just before dark we commenced our march moving over the sandy plain to the north of Vera Cruz. Our teams were drawn by the wild mustang horses we had brought from Tlacatalpin, which were perfectly unbroken and could not be made to go. In consequence drag ropes were fastened to the wagons and our poor men were compelled not only to draw them but the horses, too. After toiling some hours we halted at a small stream of bad water

where it united with the sea about three miles from Vera Cruz. I refreshed myself with a delicious bath in the tumbling surf and "with my martial cloak around me" slept on the sands till four in the morning. We then started on our weary route, toiling over the deep sand dragging the wagons and gradually breaking our horses to their work.

We made but six miles that day and bivouacked at the small town of Santa Fé. All day we had been hearing reports of the terrible battle of Cerro Gordo.

Our march on the twenty-first commenced at three o'clock in the morning and was over a hilly country, but on a tolerably good road. Our horses began to work very well for mustangs, and we labored on under a burning tropical sun, some of the men breaking down from the intense heat, till nine o'clock in the morning, when we halted near some water where there was a fine shade, and rested six hours. Several cattle out of the immense droves around us were shot, and we all got a good dinner. We could not march during the middle of the day, for there was a breathless calm and the sun would have melted men and horses in an hour.

We struck Santa Anna's *farm* about twelve miles from Vera Cruz. It is thirty miles wide and extends to within a short distance of Jalapa, making it about fifty miles long. It is said there are more than sixty thousand cattle roaming over its pastures to say nothing of the sheep and horses.

About four in the afternoon we resumed our march and continued on into the night having made about sixteen miles. At the usual hour in the morning we proceeded and at ten in the morning reached the famous Puente Nacional, much the most remarkable bridge I have ever seen, stretching with many heavy stone arches over a beautiful, rapid mountain stream. The bridge lies in a natural pass which a few brave men might defend against armies.

Above it on the summit of a lofty hill frowns a massive stone fort. The town at the northwest end of the bridge which usually contains several hundred inhabitants, we found, with the exception of a few men, entirely deserted. On a hill on the border of the village is a magnificent residence, one of Santa Anna's countryseats, at which we spent the day, the men refreshing themselves by bathing. At six in the evening the advance sounded—we marched off, up hill for two or three miles, when we found the road quite level and excellent. We were occasionally shocked by the sight of some poor soldier who had been shot by the wayside and whose unsepulchred remains were rotting on the ground. The road began to be strewed with the offensive bodies of dead horses and cattle, and the fragments of broken wagons, etc., which are ever scattered behind an army. We marched on steadily until about two in the morning, when after descending a very long steep hill down which the road winds we halted at the

town of Plan del Rio, four miles from the battle field of Cerro Gordo. Every hut, every place of shelter was found filled with the wounded.

We had marched after sunset eighteen miles, and as soon as we halted the weary men dropped on the rugged, dirty earth, the officers promiscuously scattered among them. I was officer of the day and as soon as I had posted a few sentinels I lay down in the very dust and dirt of the road with no bed or covering but my cloak, and in spite of the groans of the wounded and the shrieks of those who were suffering from the knives of the surgeons, I slept soundly for three hours.

In the morning I visited those of my friends who were wounded, among whom is Poet Patten, all his left hand but the forefinger and thumb having been carried off by a grape shot. He was doing well and is very cheerful. I consoled him with the fact that though he could no longer play the guitar he might write better poetry than before.

Here was to be seen every stage of suffering from wounds, but I will not describe to you the sickening scenes I have witnessed. We marched at five in the afternoon, being still twenty miles from Jalapa. We moved rapidly until we reached the battle field, which was at a pass that a few brave men ought to hold against the united world. It is three miles long, and by far the strongest I have ever seen. I have not time to record the various anecdotes I have heard or to

give a detailed description of the battle. It is certainly the most dreadful defeat the Mexicans have ever yet received and yet so confident were they of victory that the citizens of Jalapa rode to the ground to see the rout of our army and fireworks were prepared at various points to celebrate the flight of the "North Americans." Santa Anna publicly took an oath at the altar to conquer or leave his body on the field. — N. B. He was among the first to run.

At two o'clock yesterday we reached this place, the prettiest town I have seen, surrounded by the finest country with the most delicious climate in the world, the thermometer never rising above eighty degrees or falling much below sixty. A cloth coat is never uncomfortable, and one does not suffer in his shirt sleeves. It is more than four thousand feet above the level of the sea. Fruit and vegetables are abundant and cheap.

There are some very ancient buildings here — I have seen but one yet, a chapel built by Hernando Cortes. There is now a large Franciscan monastery attached to it and the National College.

The battle of Cerro Gordo is not likely to terminate the war as we supposed. The Mexicans appear determined never to give up even if we should take every town and fortress in the nation. What a stupid people they are! They can do nothing and their continued defeats should convince them of it. They have lost

six great battles; we have captured six hundred and eighty cannon, nearly one hundred thousand stand of arms, made twenty thousand prisoners, have possession of the greatest portion of their country and are fast advancing upon their Capital which must soon be ours, — yet they refuse to treat! “Those the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad.” . . .

CASTLE OF PEROTE,

April 29, 1847.

I wrote you a few hastily penned pages from Jalapa in which I briefly noted our march from Tlacotalpin to Vera Cruz, and from that place to Jalapa. The entire route is full of interest, many points being the scenes of severe contests of Hernando Cortes, and besides the historical interest connected with every foot of the road, the scenery on every side is of the grandest character. The great national road from Vera Cruz to Mexico, which is an admirably constructed pavement, the work of the old Spaniards, winds up and down the sides of the huge hills now abruptly ascending, now pitching into some deep valley, where it crosses the ravine or dashing stream by a stone bridge whose beautiful construction puts to shame anything of the kind in the United States.

The entire distance after the traveler passes Jalapa is bordered with the luxuriant growth of tropical climes from the stately palm to the most diminutive



cactus. The gorgeous flowers of this region are now in full bloom, and surpass anything in the vegetable kingdom of which I had before conceived. On the twenty-sixth, at two in the afternoon, our regiment marched out of Jalapa over the road of which I have been speaking. For about two miles it descended between beautiful pastures enclosed with good stone fences, and occasionally a corn or barley field all looking precisely like New England and lacking only its thriving population. The climate of this region cannot be surpassed, the soil is exceedingly rich and all the fruits in the world grow in it. If I could have my friends around me and a good government I should delight to pass my life in Jalapa. We halted at a little stream in the valley near a cotton factory, at the base of a rugged hill with an unwriteable Indian name, where Cortes fought one of his hardest battles. As soon as our train was in position we began the ascent of the eastern slope of the mountain, the road winding along its side and rising rapidly towards its summit. The afternoon was delightful, the air clear and bracing as on a November day in New York; the setting sun shone brilliantly on the snowy peak of Orizaba whose high crest was constantly in our view. At dark we reached the village of San Miguel. In this mountain region the air was cold, a damp, chilly fog closed around us making it necessary to quarter the men in some of the buildings, while the officers took possession of the

house of the curate who had fled his charge under the universal panic following the defeat of Cerro Gordo. This village most beautifully located in a kind of semi-sphere on the side of the mountain, with fine water, a glorious climate, and a productive soil, is a most miserable, filthy place.

*April 27.* In the morning before sunrise we continued our ascent, the road winding round the edge of the wide semisphere in which the village lay. As we arrived at the top the sun unobscured by a cloud rose above the horizon, apparently far below us, his first rays lighting the peak of Orizaba and showing us far in the distance the shining spires and domes of the beautiful city of Jalapa. The clouds in many-colored, gorgeous piles were resting on the summit of the mountains while the soft mists were lying in the lap of the hills below, the cultivated valleys showing all their beauties between, while here and there a bold precipice or ragged peak gave sublimity to the scene which was "beautiful exceedingly." I was in the advance with the vanguard, being officer of the day, and halted to gaze upon the view. I know not whether I am more susceptible to the effects of fine scenery than others — but this which was by far the most glorious picture of nature I have ever beheld completely overcame me, and I dropped on the earth to breathe a prayer and a thanksgiving to a good God who had made such a glorious world.

As we advanced ascending during the day the tropical plants and trees were fast disappearing from the road, being replaced by those of a more rigorous climate. Apples and peach trees were almost the only fruit-bearing ones we saw, now in full blossom, and the pine almost the only forest tree. About ten o'clock I was startled by the sight of a new Troy-built stagecoach which, drawn by six mules, driven by a Yankee and filled with Yankee passengers, was dashing down the mountain road at the speed of ten miles an hour. I looked at *it* and the apple trees by my side and could almost imagine I was ascending some hill in New York.

About noon we reached the pass of La Hoya, a wild ravine overlooked by the fortified peaks of the hills around it and passing directly through the extinct crater of an ancient volcano. This position is as strong as Cerro Gordo and preparations had been made to defend it, but the enemy abandoned it and their cannon, under the panic which seems to have seized the entire nation after the battle of the eighteenth. This is the highest point in the road between the coast and the City of Mexico, about nine thousand feet above the sea. We were glad to commence the descent. Before night we halted at a small stream, Agua Frio, having marched thirteen miles. On our left towered the lofty peak, Cofire del Perote, in our front could be seen the snowy summit of Popocatepetl and the

silver crest of Orizaba was also still visible. A stone bridge spanned the small stream near us, and just above it was a distillery in full operation.

Our bivouac was made around the ruins of an old palace. It was a massive, square construction nearly one hundred feet on a side. A colonnade with heavy arches and pillars ran the entire extent of the front. Passing through the only gate, I entered a square court about fifty feet on a side, surrounded by Doric columns which once supported the roof of the porches into which the extensive rooms of the building opened. The inhabitants know nothing of its history and it has evidently been abandoned for centuries. Every particle of woodwork is decayed, the roofs entirely gone, and the earth has gradually risen, nearly covering the bases of the pillars and burying the marble pavements many feet below. It was a moated work, the remains of the ditch being evident on two sides, serving now for fences to the adjoining fields. Trees are growing from some of the rooms, showing the extreme antiquity of the building. It was probably erected by some of the Spanish nobles who came to this country soon after the conquest by Cortes. Here knights have armed for the battle and celebrated their victories on their return. Here blushing beauty has listened to the amorous tale breathed in her ear by her warrior lover. Where are they all now? The beauties have mouldered in the tomb forgotten. The

very memory of the knights is gone. In the words of an old poet:

“ Their bones are dust,  
Their swords are rust,  
Their souls are with their God we trust.”

*April 28.* The sun was far above the horizon before we marched, as we had but nine miles to make to Perote. We soon came upon the extensive plain upon which stands the celebrated castle. The plain which extends for many miles is eight or nine miles in width with a light but productive soil. The castle of Perote is nearly in its centre, perhaps nearer the western extremity, and about one mile to the south of it is the village, overhung by the Coffre del Perote. I rode into the town before going to the castle, which is garrisoned by the Sixth and Eighth Infantry, saw General Worth, and Major Kirby, from whom I received my desk upon which I am now writing. The village is a fourth-rate Mexican town but the castle is a *chef-d'œuvre*. A square, bastioned work, every portion of it complete and of the most massive construction, capable of containing many thousand men and of enduring a long siege — but notwithstanding its strength, the Mexicans fled from it without attempting its defence. We have no work to compare with it in the United States. It was completed in 1776.

The advance of General Worth's division is some twenty miles from here, and we shall soon move on

Puebla. Since the battle of Cerro Gordo, the Mexican Congress have passed a law making it treason for any one to propose *peace*, in fact, declaring perpetual war. Rejou and Gomez Farrias have been endeavoring to get up a peace party and have been denounced as traitors by the Mexican papers. They are very influential and known to be patriots. I have therefore some hopes that they may succeed and that we are near the end of the war. If they do not, I see no result but an armed occupation, colonization, and years of guerilla warfare. . . .

CASTLE OF PEROTE,  
April 30, 1847.

. . . I have been all day preparing muster rolls. I miss Meyerbach very much in these matters. My company like all the rest in the regiment is in bad order. It numbers ninety-six and only seventy-nine are present, nearly half of whom are recruits who have been drilled but little or none at all. I shall, however, make a strong effort to give them some instruction at every delay on our route. I mentioned in some one of my letters that I belonged to Lieutenant-Colonel C. F. Smith's light battalion of four companies. I was separated from it before the close of the siege at Vera Cruz, but on arriving here I was informed that I would be ordered to rejoin it immediately, but before the order was published I requested through Major Kirby to be allowed to remain here till after muster.

Other circumstances I think will delay me a few days longer. I have been on a Council of Administration today for concurrence in the appointment of a chaplain to our brigade. The Rev. Mr. McCarty of our church, formerly from Oswego, receives the appointment. I am not much acquainted with him, but he appears to be an excellent man. It will really be refreshing to hear another sermon, which pleasure I hope to have on Sunday, though perhaps by that time I may be on some far away scout. The rainy season, I believe, has commenced, for there has been a heavy shower every evening since we arrived, and this morning the lofty summit of the Coffre del Perote was covered with snow which had fallen during the night. I feel extremely sad and lonesome in this great prison-like castle. Every sound echoes through its vast halls and interminable galleries, and although there are so many of us in it, it is so capacious that it scarcely appears to be occupied. The ordnance command here have been busied today in breaking up the Mexican arms found in the castle. Muskets, escopets, and rifles have been literally smashed. The gun stocks are used for firewood and the barrels and locks broken on an anvil. They can be of no use to us and it is determined they shall be of none to the enemy. Those taken on the battle field were burnt. The iron cannons, I am told, are all to be destroyed and the brass and copper guns to be taken to the United

States. What fools the Mexicans are that they don't make peace!

*May 1.* . . . An order has been received from General Scott directing a forward movement of the whole army to commence as soon as the large provision train arrives. By this order it appears that he intends to abandon his rear and suffer his communications with the coast to be cut off. The army, therefore, is to depend upon the country for supplies which will probably be scanty enough — however, “Forward” is the word; the “Halls of the Montezumas” our destination, and I confidently think that we shall soon be in possession of the Capital, though I do *not* believe a “peace will be conquered.” The guerilla system is already in operation. The train which is now coming up was attacked a few days since, and some killed and wounded on both sides, though the Mexicans were repulsed.

*May 2.* It is Sunday. I attended divine service this morning. A table was placed under the porch of the commanding officer's quarters, which served as a desk. The men were paraded in masses in the courtyard, the officers standing near the chaplain. After reading the service he preached a good sound, though unornamented sermon on the necessity of religion; it was a continuation of his discourse of last Sunday. This is the first Protestant service I have heard since I left Syracuse in August, 1846. I am officer of the



day and my company the castle guard. In the course of my duties I have been completely round the work in the ditch.

On the west side, in the curtain near the flank wall of the south bastion, I observed a huge wooden cross mortised into a circular stone pedestal about two feet in height. At the junction of the pedestal and cross is a stone step a few inches high sufficiently large for a man's feet, and at the extremity of the horizontal arms of the cross are arrangements for fastening hands. The wall behind the cross was thickly marked with musket balls for fifty feet in each direction. All round the pedestal and upon it were the bleaching bones, skulls, arms, legs, and vertebrae, promiscuously mingled, of those who had been executed here, and left to the worm and buzzard without sepulchre. As I gazed upon these remains of poor mortality, I thought perhaps they were the relics of those brave Texans who were captured at Mier, many of whom were executed here. This is probably the place of general execution for the castle.

HACIENDO, SAN ANTONIO,

May 3, 1847.

About ten this morning I received an order to march as an escort to the siege train under Hayner to this place and then to proceed to Tipi Gualco to join the light battalion. My company marched out of the castle about half-past one, took the great road to

*P.V. Hayner*

Mexico, and before sunset reached here, eight miles from Perote, where there is a large garrison under Major Wright. This hacienda is worthy of a description. The front of it is immediately on the road — the main entrance being through the building and opening upon an enclosure of at least one hundred and fifty yards on a side, surrounded by a high stone wall with flanking towers on the diagonal corners. On two sides of it are extensive sheds, and in the centre a large and very deep well from which the water is drawn by horse or mule power. The animal is harnessed to a sweep which turns a windlass like an old-fashioned cider mill. He moves round in one direction until the bucket reaches the top, when he is turned and travels the opposite way until the other bucket comes up. This is kept going night and day, the water being turned into troughs from which it is used for every purpose, agricultural and domestic. There are now in the storehouses here more than ten thousand bushels of corn and barley which have been purchased by our quarter-master. About the exterior are huge stacks of straw and corn stalks for fodder, no hay being ever made in this country. This estate, which belongs to a young man, is twelve miles square and has on it large herds of cattle, flocks of sheep, droves of mules, horses, and swine, and some hundreds of slaves — they are called peons — who are under the worst kind of bondage, belonging to their masters until they get

out of debt to him, which he takes care they never shall do. These poor creatures under an overseer are turned out to work before daylight. They are assembled in a sort of military array before a great cross erected near the main entrance of the hacienda, where they all join in a matin song. When they return from work in the evening a similar ceremony takes place, — in the presence of the overseer, mounted on his horse, they sing their hymn to the Virgin. The song concluded they retire to their huts to gather strength, amidst their dirt, for another day's servitude.

We hear that General Scott says that in all probability our communication with Vera Cruz will be cut off from six to nine months. A sweet prospect not to hear from you for nine months! I don't believe the story — it must be all gammon! I shall continue to write as hitherto. We march in the morning at sunrise. . . .

*May 4, Tipi Gualco (old Indian meaning, lost).* We left San Antonio early this morning. A heavy mist lay upon the plain making it quite dark and wetting us almost as completely as a drenching rain. I felt wretchedly. Last night after writing in a room full of officers who were sleeping around me, I put out my light and lay down, but soon felt an attack of gastritis coming on. I endeavored to lie still not being willing to disturb any one, in the hope it would soon pass off. It, however, became unendurable and I was com-

pelled to arouse my man Barney who slept in the anteroom and send for the doctor. He soon relieved me, but as usual I am paying for it today. Mem. — Barney is a character. For many years he was in the service of W. R. Johnson, the “Napoleon of the Turf,” and rode Peytona on all her famous races. He is an acute little jockey, and a most excellent servant. He has become much attached to me and, I believe, serves me from pure love.

About eight o'clock the mist suddenly rolled away over the tops of the high mountains about us, showing that we were on an arid plain herbless and desolate. Our whole route was the same until at eleven o'clock we reached this town situated at the base of a high pumice stone mountain of the same name. Everything here showed decay and misrule. I reported to Colonel Garland and to Lieutenant-Colonel Smith, and after an hour or two succeeded in obtaining shelter for my company and myself in a dirty, ruined place nearly a mile from the rest of the brigade. By some labor we have made it comfortable and a cup of coffee has made me feel quite well. We are near the house of the curate, and this afternoon, with Rossell and Farrelly, I visited him.

He was nearly frightened to death when we entered his domicile — or rather yard — at the gate of which he was standing, and taking off his high-crowned sombrero, he bowed nearly to the earth. We sat down

in his humble dwelling and soon succeeded in restoring his confidence, especially after Farrelly assured him *he* was a Catholic. We went through the church which is very large, and was once a fine building but is now much dilapidated. The padre accompanied us to our quarters, and after sipping a *glass* of wine with us out of a *tin pint* cup left us apparently quite our friend. In this high desert land fleas and ticks are too wise to live, so I hope to pass a quiet night. *Buenos noches.*

*May 5.* Nothing new today either from the front or rear save a rumor, which I think entirely unfounded, that Trowbridge and his clerk have been murdered near Santa Fé. I do not believe that he has yet arrived at Vera Cruz. I beg you to continue to write to me as hitherto, for the reënforcements which must continue to arrive will escort the mails from Vera Cruz, even should we be unable to send ours to that point. Be under no apprehensions on my account if you do not hear from me. My health is good and I shall take good care to keep it so. We are in a healthy region and I do not believe we shall have another general action.

My opinion of volunteers and the whole volunteer system is not changed in the least. They are expensive, unruly, and not to be relied upon in action. Their conduct towards the poor inhabitants has been horrible, and their coming is dreaded like death in every village in Mexico, while the regulars are met by the

people almost as friends. A portion of them (the volunteers) have fled in every action in which they have been engaged and they can never succeed unless supported by the *line*. At Monterey, Buena Vista, and Cerro Gordo portions of them ran. General Taylor says in a letter that at Buena Vista, had they not been turned back by the enemy who had got to his rear, many more than did would have entirely fled the battle field. Pillow's Brigade of volunteers were defeated at Cerro Gordo, and he requested the General to send him a few regulars, if only one company, to support and set an example to his men. The first instance is yet to occur in this war in which a regular has abandoned his post or been defeated. Portions of the volunteers have fought most gallantly, but when they will fight, and when they won't, can only be determined by experiment. I am aware that these opinions would be considered almost treasonable in the United States, but here they are the sentiments of all the regulars and of a large number of the volunteer officers in the field.

. . . . .  
May 6, *Tepeyahualco* (*correct spelling, pronounced Ta-pa-āh-wolko*). This was once a fine little town, most of it is now in ruins. It is between fifty and sixty miles from Puebla which is said to be the third city in Mexico. There are now here Duncan's light battery, the light battalion under Colonel C. F. Smith, to

which I am acting major; the Second Artillery commanded by Captain McKenzie, the Third Artillery by Colonel Belton, and the Fourth Infantry under Colonel Graham. These battalions with five companies of the Fifth, which are still at Perote, constitute a brigade under Colonel Garland. Our men have suffered terribly here with ague and fever and bilious intermittents. The sickness arises from their great exposure in the *tierra caliente* near the coast, their bivouacking in the heavy dews and rains, and the excessive fatigue of their long march. The cases are generally light, and in this cool, healthy climate they will soon recover. Dr. Satterlee is my attending physician.

Some Mexican gentlemen came in this morning from Puebla. One of them, a very intelligent man, educated in Hartford, Connecticut, represents the country as in a most deplorable condition, the Government as utterly disorganized by the battle of Cerro Gordo, which he pronounces the most serious blow the Republic has ever received. The Government, he says, is not capable of carrying on the war or of making a peace. The roads are filled with bands of robbers under the name of guerillas, who are as ready to plunder and murder the Mexicans as they are to attack us. The city of Puebla has a deputation prepared to meet us before we reach its gates to escort us within its walls, and an officer ready to turn over

the public property. From the best information there is not at this time more than four thousand Infantry of the enemy under arms in all this portion of Mexico. There are besides some three thousand cavalry under General Canalizo who escaped from the battle of Cerro Gordo, but they are of no account, and we neither know nor care where they are.

There is no middle class in this country. The upper "ten hundred" not "ten thousand" possess all the wealth and are continually quarreling about the control of affairs and creating constant revolutions. The millions are steeped in ignorance, vice, and poverty, subject to the priests and trampled to the dust by the wealthy. . . .

*May 7.* There is a probability of our remaining here some days. Some troops were sent this morning to the village of San Juan, seven miles distant, to secure certain supplies which were intercepted by a petty robber chief. They returned this evening and reported that the chief had fled, but they found San Juan a fine, neat town containing three churches and from three to four thousand inhabitants. It lies in a rich, cultivated valley about twenty miles in extent. So far we have been able to secure at high prices an abundance of grain, flour, beef, mutton, fresh pork, some coffee, sugar and salt, with common tallow candles, so that the army can be tolerably well provisioned without transporting supplies from the sea-



board during the hot season. I wish we could move forward to Puebla where the sick would be more comfortable. I have now forty-five men of my company sick, twenty-three of them are present, and the remaining twenty-two have been left at various places on the route. . . .

*May 8.* This is the anniversary of the battle of Palo Alto, my first fight, the first of the war, and perhaps the most important in its consequences. Little did we think, who were engaged in that contest, that in one year we would be in the heart of Mexico, and that a salute in honor of that victory would peal from the walls of San Juan D'Ulloa. Where shall we be a year hence? *Quien sabe?* perhaps in California, perhaps *at home*, which may God grant.

Seven regiments of volunteers are going home, their time having expired. This will reduce our force so much that it is doubtful whether General Scott will think it prudent to advance beyond Puebla. . . .

*May 9.* This is the anniversary of the battle of Resaca. How differently I feel now with regard to the war from what I did then! *Then* vague visions of glory and a speedy peace floated through my brain. *Now* I have learned in common with many other poor fellows that it is not he who patiently does his duty, or who in the hour of danger is in the front of the battle, who gains the laurel or the more vulgar reward of government patronage. It is too frequently the

sycophant who flatters the foibles of his commanding officer, he who has political family influence, or whom some accident makes conspicuous, who reaps all the benefits of the exposure and labors of others. The long list of brevets, most outrageously unjust as they are, many of them double, is a register of evidence to the facts that success is a lottery and that government rewards are by no means dependent on merit. How tired and sick I am of a war to which I can see no probable termination! How readily would I exchange my profession for any honest, mechanical employment, were it possible to do so! How instantly would I resign if I saw any certainty of supporting my family in tolerable comfort or even decency in civil life! Why do I grumble or let you know how miserable I am? Think not I am always so. It is not often that I suffer my mind to dwell on these matters, or yield to any despondency. General Worth ("Young Cortes") has arrived with the remainder of the Second Brigade. . . . General Worth's division is to march at once to Puebla. . . . General Worth informs me that Major Kirby has gone back to Jalapa by order of General Scott, who wants his shrewd counsel and can find no other man capable of settling the confused accounts of the "Mohawks" who are tired of the war and are going home to boast of their deeds of arms. . . . Rossell is in fine health. He is an excellent officer and ought to have been brevetted for Monterey. . . .

VEREYES,  
May 10, 1847.


I dispatched a missive to you this morning just before we marched from Tepeyahualco which we left at eight in the morning. We moved with the Dragoons under Thornton in advance, then Duncan's light battery, then Smith's light battalion, of which I am acting major, not a "real live" major, not even a brevet, then the Second Artillery, then the Third under Belton<sup>1</sup> (who by the bye expresses much interest in your welfare), then the wagon train, and finally the Fourth Infantry as a rear guard. Our route lay through the same arid plain which I have already described. Orizaba's silver crest on our left shone in the morning sun like a metallic dome to some huge cathedral, while Popocatepetl just showed his snowy summit over the lower mountains in our advance, resembling a white cloud on the far distant horizon. As the sun approached the zenith it became intensely hot. We, however, marched with great deliberation and by one o'clock encamped in order of battle at this place, having made twelve miles.

This is nothing but an extensive hacienda where besides the proprietor's house and a large enclosure with the peons' huts there is a chapel and a fine well. Wells on this great Mexican plateau are property as they were in the patriarchal days of Abraham.

<sup>1</sup> His uncle by marriage.

I am now for the first time since the beginning of the war about to advance the opinion that we are on the verge of a peace. As I have been hitherto correct in my prognostics, I trust my "second sight" will not prove erroneous now. My reasons for advancing this opinion are numerous. This morning the diligence (the aforesaid Troy stage) entered the town of Tepeyahualco before we left. It was direct from the City of Mexico, the first arrival from that place since the battle of Cerro Gordo. In it were one English and three Mexican gentlemen, who stated that the peace party under Rejou and Gomez Farrias was fast gaining strength; that both at Puebla and Mexico the inhabitants were anxious for our presence to protect them from their own banditti who were robbing the defenceless; that the church and people were now convinced that we outside barbarians had not come here to dismember the state or destroy their religion; and that the unconditional release of the prisoners taken at Cerro Gordo and their being furnished with provisions to support them to their homes had produced such a wonderful effect upon the remainder of the army that their generals had been obliged to embody them and send them under guards to their villages, for fear that their statements would cause the residue of their troops already disaffected to entirely disband. I see no reason to doubt their assertions and I now believe that in two months negotiations for *peace* will have commenced. . . .

*May 12, El Peñal.* We marched on the tenth as usual passing several haciendas. Our route lay through a country very similar to that which I have already described. The same bold mountain peaks in every direction bounding the same extensive level plain—the great Mexican plateau. The character of the soil improved and the cultivated fields were more numerous and extensive. About two in the afternoon we passed a beautiful spot, Ojo de Agua. This extensive hacienda lay at the foot of a bold mountain. Besides the usual residence of the wealthy proprietor, who was there to welcome us, there were many neat, stone houses for the peons, arranged in parallel streets like the negro quarters on a large Louisiana plantation, and a beautiful little chapel with an ornamented dome and two steeples for bells, having in front of it an exquisite garden filled with rare tropical flowers in full bloom. I gathered a large bouquet which I only wish I could place in your hand. We marched two or three miles from Ojo in a gale of wind, so completely filling the air with dust that we could not see a rod before us. We encamped in a corn field, the young corn just above the ground, at some nameless hacienda. This morning at daylight the Second Brigade of our division under Colonel Clarke overtook us, and we all marched at six in the morning. We found the character of the country much changed. On both sides of the road, the plain to the base of the moun-



tains and in some instances far up their sides was well cultivated and in every direction lying in the midst of the rich corn and barley fields were haciendas and towns. Some pear, peach, and apple trees grew along the road and an occasional grove of pines and locusts. Among the more useful productions of the soil is the aloe or century plant, from which is made the pulque, the universal drink of the Mexicans. The fields are divided by long hedges of it. We arrived at the town of Nopalucam at half-past ten, an ordinary Mexican town. The padre more sensible than most of his brethren kept all his people at home instead of suffering them to flee before us "barbarians."

We have heard that Santa Anna is in our advance a few leagues with a considerable force. When we get there if he has not fled we will give him another edition of Cerro Gordo. We encamped at two o'clock about twenty-two miles from Puebla. The wind blows so I cannot write any more; this bivouacking is ridiculous business.

*May 13.* During the night we had an alarm, several shots were fired by our pickets and the long roll beat. We were all under arms at two o'clock, and remained so till daylight, when our battalion with a squadron of Dragoons and two engineers with the sappers and miners were sent in advance to search for some fougasses which it was reported the enemy had made under the road. After advancing about two miles,

the road winding along the base of the mountain, we reached the famous pass of El Peñal. Here the valley between two mountains is narrow, the ground gullied and broken and a broad, deep ravine whose sides are perpendicular and twenty or thirty feet high confines the narrow road to the immediate base of the mountain, which is precipitous and ragged with ledges and broken rocks, sustaining, wherever the crevices afford sufficient soil, large pine trees, hence the name. Here the engineers found that the Mexicans had commenced establishing mines under the road by constructing galleries from the ravine but they were abandoned incomplete. Information was sent back to the general and after advancing about a mile farther we halted for the main body to come up. It overtook us at seven in the morning and an hour after we resumed our usual order of march.

We soon entered the small town of Acajete where we halted again for an hour. Here we were told that Santa Anna had retreated from Puebla, and that there had been a Pronunciamento against him in Mexico. After passing Acajete the road leaves the mountains, although they are still visible in every direction, and passes through a cultivated plain sprinkled with small villages and haciendas. At one place for at least a mile it is cut down into the soil ten feet resembling the deep cutting for a railroad.

About one o'clock we entered Amazoque which is a considerable town with a large plaza, several fine churches, and some extensive barracks for Dragoons and Infantry. The inhabitants were not at all alarmed at our approach — the streets were crowded as they would be in the United States on a training day, the women and men mingling freely among our ranks as we halted in the plaza; the hucksters and market women were all about us hawking their various articles of trade. There was a great variety of fruits there, pines, oranges, mama apples, cocoanuts, ripe cherries, raspberries, and peaches. We soon got into quarters, such as they were, with the expectation of resting here over tomorrow waiting for General Quitman's Brigade one day behind us.

*May 14.* The morning broke most delightfully, as it ever does in this delicious climate, and although I had been quite sick in the night, I dressed in my best, intending to take a look at the nut-brown dames of Amazoque, when a sudden change came over the scene. The long roll sounded, a call which always thrills to the very marrow of a soldier, as it never beats on light occasions and is the usual prelude to a battle. Amid all the confusion it was impossible for some time to ascertain the cause of the alarm. We soon learned that a large force was advancing from the direction of Puebla. Our little battalion was kept in the square as a part of the reserve, while a portion



of the artillery and the main Infantry force marched out to meet the foe who were moving round the right of the town, apparently to get in our rear. Our cannon soon opened upon them, throwing them into great confusion. By this time, about nine o'clock, we ascertained that their force was only about twenty-five hundred cavalry with three pieces of artillery. They did not attempt to return our fire but marched in considerable confusion to our right and rear. As they approached Quitman's Brigade, which warned by our guns was drawn up in order of battle, they retreated still farther to the right, and thus ended the battle of Amazoque. With no loss on our side we took some five or six prisoners, including their chaplain and a lieutenant, and eight cavalry horses. The number of their killed is variously estimated from twenty to fifty. Their forces were led by Santa Anna in person, but no one can devise what could have been the object of his movement.

PUEBLA,  
May 15, 1847.

After the one-sided fight yesterday, of which I have spoken, we expected to remain in quiet until the next day, but our battalion and the First Brigade were ordered to advance at three o'clock and after marching a mile and a half from the town were halted near a hacienda, our little battalion being far out in a naked corn field, where from the nature of the ground our

wagons were unable to reach us. It was near night when we got our position — the sky threatened a storm and we had been without food nearly all the day. We received orders that no fires would be allowed, and that the men must remain by their arms as we were to march sometime between eight and ten in the evening. Before ten it rained violently with a driving wind, completely drenching us all, and the time for marching was changed to three in the morning.

The poor men were without greatcoats or blankets and were excessively uncomfortable. I had brought my cloak on my horse, and with my saddle for a pillow, I lay down on the ground and despite the pelting storm slept soundly until I was waked by an aide-de-camp giving orders that the march should be deferred till daylight. The storm was entirely past and I obtained permission to build a fire, by which the men dried their dripping clothes and put their arms in order. We started at dawn and soon came into a little village from which the spires and domes of Puebla were visible. Here we saw two beautiful carriages of English make which late in the night brought a deputation from the city to confer with General Worth. We soon proceeded, throwing out flankers and using every precaution against surprise. About two miles from the city we halted at a heavy stone bridge over a small stream where the entire

division with Quitman's Brigade was closed up, our baggage placed in rear of all but a guard, when with our colors displayed and our bands playing national airs we marched into the city over a fine macadamized road thronged with immense numbers of the teeming population.

This place has no suburbs, does not thin off to the country as our cities do, but from the cultivated fields you come at once among the compactly built dwellings. The streets are broad, and were swarming with the multitude as far as the eye could reach, — the cross streets too were filled in every direction, indeed, I am sure I never before saw half so many people together. Our little army of four thousand was completely lost in the crowds that pressed around us, examining us pretty much as they would the animals in a menagerie. As we marched in front of the palace we were saluted by the municipal troops, and on reaching the large central plaza we were halted, stacked our arms, and rested about two hours while quarters were assigned to the different corps. I have seen as yet but little of the place, but quite enough to satisfy me that there is nothing to compare with it in the United States. A great many priests were moving about among the throng or sitting on the balconies with the ladies. They all wore black robes and on their heads felt hats resembling in shape a flattened piece of stove pipe with a hole in the side for the head. As they passed

all the people took off their hats and bowed low. I believe we are all now in our quarters, sentinels posted and patrols established for the night.

The papers here state that Santa Anna lost ninety men in the skirmish yesterday. I have not half told the story of the fight, but I must cut off my long yarn. . . .

*May 16.* . . . Yesterday after making my toilet I dined at the Comercio, an eating-house near the palace kept by a little Frenchman. This is Sunday. I went to Mass at the Cathedral. This vast building, standing on one side of the plaza opposite the palace, far surpasses any church I have ever seen, and is said to be the richest and most beautiful one in the entire New World. At some future day I may say more of this building, but at present have only time to remark that the interior is rich beyond description with silver and gold ornaments, polished marble, and a very great number of admirable old paintings of great value.

There have been several cases of stabbing today and one soldier killed. It is dangerous to go about alone or unarmed, indeed the orders are that no one shall leave his quarters without arms. It is thought that the guerillas and rabble are in league together, and in consequence of some information to this effect the guards have been doubled this evening since tattoo and all are cautioned to be ready for service.

*May 17.* Late last night after scratching the above I went to bed but was soon aroused by the galloping of a horse which halted at the entrance to my quarters, and Worth's adjutant-general called to me that he desired to see Colonel Smith. There was a fresh alarm arising from anonymous letters to the general, and we were, therefore, required to be exceedingly vigilant. He had hardly left when a Mexican came groaning to our door, severely stabbed and cut in the head. I have learned enough Mexican to understand from his statements that the native thieves (*ladrones*) were robbing his house and maltreating his family, but as we make it a rule to let these people settle their own difficulties we directed him to go at once to the *Alcalde*. The first night of our arrival a young woman was stabbed to death immediately in front of our quarters, and lay on the pavement until ten o'clock the next day. We were fortunately able to prove that it was the act of a Mexican. These disturbances made us feel quite uneasy — we feared that before morning there would be a general alarm, but nothing happened, all was quiet this morning and so continued through the day. I have been confined to my quarters most of the time in consequence of the absence of Colonel Smith — the order requiring that one of the field officers of each battalion be always present with it. General Worth and staff with all the senior officers called in great state upon the Bishop, who is repre-

sented as a venerable, liberal, and highly accomplished old gentleman. The call was ceremoniously returned in a few hours. The courtesy which we are showing to these officials is certainly good policy, for if we can only get the clergy on our side peace must soon ensue. Their influence, which is unbounded, can alone control the lower orders in this densely populated district. I have been in many of the stores this afternoon and made some few purchases. Ordinary articles of merchandise are very reasonable though imported goods are dear. A bottle of French brandy which could be had in New York for seventy-five cents costs two dollars here, and sperm candles are ten shillings per pound. Anything can be obtained here for money. The fruit market is admirable. . . . Everything is quiet this evening — no new cases of stabbing — I think all excitement is dying away.

Our communications with the coast are so very uncertain that I am likely to get a large packet for you before I have an opportunity to send it off.

*May 18.* . . . . The inhabitants are fast losing their false impressions and becoming reconciled to us. The more I see of this city the more I admire it. It is kept exceedingly clean — the streets which are all admirably paved with square blocks of granite look as if they were not only swept, but scoured. The sidewalks are about five feet in breadth. The inhabitants early in the morning sweep in front of their houses,

bringing from the interior the accumulated dirt of the previous twenty-four hours, placing it in heaps in the middle of the street. By sunrise the police carts are passing and all the filth is carried entirely out of the city. Another source of purification is the regular rains, which commence *every* day about half-past four and continue about three hours. The rest of the day is clear and the temperature delightful. This is invariable for several months in the year. The city is built on a rich and extensive plain not far from the base of the snow-crowned mountains, Orizaba, Popocatepetl, and Volcano de Puebla, of which I have so often spoken and of which the eye never wearies. The horizon in every other direction is bounded by mountains of lesser magnitude. The streets are laid out at right angles. The houses which are admirably constructed in the old Spanish style are generally two stories in height, though often three. On some of the streets and around the main plaza the upper story projects over the sidewalk and is supported by arches resting on a heavy colonnade, often of the purest Doric order. The roofs are all flat, of stone or brick, covered with excellent cement. There are no eave gutters, but every few feet a long spout of tin or stone often richly carved projects from the foot of the battlement throwing the water beyond the sidewalk. In the interior of each dwelling is a square court, generally with a fine fountain playing in the centre of

a large, stone reservoir, around which are fruit and ornamental trees and great numbers of pots containing the beautiful and ever-blooming plants of this glorious clime — where there is one eternal spring. Here once might have been paradise, and still might be, were not man so vile. There are a great number of fine churches in the city, I should think at least twenty, and although the interiors of all which I have entered are richly ornamented with statuary, paintings and gilding they sink into insignificance compared with the Cathedral. Besides the “stove-pipe priests,” whom I saw on the day of our arrival, many others are constantly passing to and fro in the streets. Dominicans in their white robes, Franciscans in their gray ones, with their deep hoods and rope girdles. I do not know of any nuns here. . . .

*May 19.* All sorts of rumors have been flying about among us. One report is, and it seems to be the most authentic, that Santa Anna has abandoned San Miguel where he was fortifying with the intention of giving us battle, and has moved towards Mexico. It is said a portion of his troops — one thousand cavalry — have left him. On the fifteenth instant the presidential election took place throughout the country. It was over here before we entered the city. Santa Anna, of course, is a prominent candidate, though he has lost much of his popularity, and it is thought will be defeated. It is even reported here



this afternoon that Herrera, the peace candidate, is elected. I doubt it — for it could not be known yet, if it were so, as each state or department, as with us, makes up its returns, which I believe are counted at the Capital.

General Twiggs with his command is expected in two or three days.

*May 20.* Very little news today. I regret that I am so much confined to the quarters that I cannot visit the forts about the town, from one of which the famous pyramid of Cholula, though several miles distant, is visible. . . . A large quantity of government tobacco was seized today, worth at least one hundred thousand dollars. Tobacco here is a government monopoly — its growth confined to certain districts, its universal use by both sexes makes it a source of great revenue.

*May 21.* . . . I have been to Fort Loretto today, which is built upon a hill some two hundred feet above the plain, and is about fifteen hundred yards to the east of the city, which it commands, and is itself commanded by the Church of Guadalupe.

From it there is an exquisite view of the plain, city, and surrounding country. . . . The people here think Herrera is elected. I still doubt it. . . .

*Sunday, May 23.* I attended the service in the Cathedral this morning. Worth and his staff were there among the crowded audience, who were kneeling

on the marble floor during the gorgeous ceremonies, where everything is calculated to strike the senses not to persuade the reason. There are but few seats in any of the churches in this country, most of the worshipers kneeling in the body of the building, constantly repeating their prayers, crossing themselves, and beating their breasts during the chanting, apparently as humble and contrite as beings can be.

*May 25.* Nothing of interest has occurred today or yesterday. We hear thousands of reports about the Mexican forces to which I pay little attention. It appears certain, however, that they are assembling a large force — twenty thousand it is said — in and about the Capital, though they are neither well armed nor disciplined. If we advance they will probably make a stand a few leagues this side of the City of Mexico. I still, however, strongly hope that negotiations for peace will be begun before we leave this place — though the prospect is darker than it was a few days since. The other division of the army under Twiggs left Jalapa Saturday and General Scott on Sunday, and are expected to arrive here on Friday. We shall then be over *eight thousand strong*. What an immense army to invade a populous country and conquer a nation! We may, in fact, be considered a *forlorn hope*! — always contending against desperate odds.

If fifty thousand men had landed at Vera Cruz, I don't believe there would have been a battle and we should now be in the City of Mexico or have already made peace.

*May 26.* I am now so much confined to my quarters, not having left them in three days, that I see little of what is going on. All is quiet in the city though we are kept constantly on the alert by frequent reports of projected risings among the people, and a Mexican was detected yesterday night posting inflammatory handbills. Report says today that General Bravo at the head of sixteen thousand men is advancing from Mexico. That there is some movement in that quarter appears certain, probably they are fortifying some strong point on the road which they intend to hold. Our communications are now so uncertain with Vera Cruz that I think it exceedingly doubtful if this ever reaches you. I trust, however, you will receive it and if you do not hear again for months will attribute it to the proper cause, and console yourself with the certainty that a heavy package is accumulating. . . . It will be well hereafter not to draw any pay until you hear that I am in the land of the living at the close of the month for which you draw. I have just been privately told that a courier leaves in the morning and I expect to get this into his budget. I feel in closing these sheets that I am taking a long leave of you and my heart is heavy. . . .

PUEBLA,  
May 27, 1847.

As General Worth thought the opportunity a safe one, I sent you a packet yesterday which has been accumulating since the tenth instant. I begin again but with not the least idea when my letter will leave. Perfect quiet has reigned throughout the city for some days. Last night we heard that there is no army advancing from Mexico as had been stated but that there is a force of twelve thousand at a strong point, El Peñon, three leagues this side of the city.

*May 28.* General Scott arrived today at one o'clock. Uncle Edmund is with him but I have not yet seen him. We changed our quarters at two o'clock today from one side of the city to the other. Later I will describe our position. Mem. — A beautiful Mexican girl, the niece of General Furlong, kissed her pretty hand repeatedly to me this evening whilst her carriage was standing near my quarters. Don't be jealous! I do not know her; she probably thought I was one of General Worth's staff — nevertheless, she is a very sweet young lady as I testified by my admiring looks.

*May 29.* General Twiggs with his division arrived today and I received several letters. . . .

*Monday, May 31.* We hear from Mexico this evening that Santa Anna has resigned all his offices and wishes to leave the country, in consequence of the strength of the peace party. He says, we are told, in

his proclamation that personally and politically he is in the way of peace and therefore retires. He is a scamp and everything he does causes distrust, — but should the above prove true, I shall draw the very best auguries from it. If Herrera is President, or if Gomez Farrias and Rejou are in power, peace, sweet peace must follow.

*June 1.* I have a touch of rheumatism today in my foot; it is swollen some and very painful. It looks amazingly like gout, and I am so weak as to feel ashamed of it so have concealed it from all. I dined today with Uncle Edmund and in the afternoon took a long walk about the city examining the many curious things in the shops, of which none are, perhaps, more strange to our eyes than the equipments for horses. Grotesque spurs, bridles, harnesses, etc., rich with silver ornaments, tempted me to make up a box of curiosities to send home by the first opportunity. There are many hacks about the streets to be hired at a reasonable rate. They are drawn by mules and driven by postillions. The tails of the animals are enclosed in large, leathern bags, often ornamented and embossed with brass or silver — but whether they are worn to spare the modesty of the mules or the biped passengers I have not yet ascertained. After being well fatigued with our ramble and my rheumatic foot throbbing like the toothache, we, in company with Colonel Hitchcock who had joined us in the streets,

adjourned to an ice cream shop for refreshment. By the bye, this is the first place in Mexico where I have found the ice cream good and well flavored — one shilling per glass.

*June 2.* Have not left my quarters today except to attend parades. I have, however, heard this evening that an extensive department, the Tierra Caliente, has pronounced for the Americans — that is for peace. Whether this be true or not, all the signs show that a large party among the Mexican people are in favor of a negotiation which must soon commence unless our apparent weakness, we being but a forlorn hope in the heart of a great nation, should induce their leaders to suppose they can crush us. A crisis is at hand and we shall either have desperate fighting or the yellow gentry must give up. Trist is here with the three million — but I can only allude to his operations and our military dispositions, as it is an even chance that this will fall into the hands of the enemy as did the first mail sent from this place to Vera Cruz.

*June 3.* A mail will leave at daylight in the morning and my letter must be in the bag at dark. I was going to a regular bullfight this afternoon in the hope of seeing a Mexican matadore *killed*. Am I not a good fellow to give up such a *pleasure* to write to you? The news still continues to prove that the peace party is gaining strength throughout the country, though before we get a peace I think we shall have one great

battle. The signs are now that we shall advance in a few days and perhaps "revel in the Halls," before the end of the month. . . .

[The remainder of this journal was brought from Mexico by Lieutenant Peck in February, 1848, five months after the death of the writer who fell mortally wounded at the battle of Molino del Rey, September 8, 1847.]

PUEBLA,  
June 4, 1847.

My last letter went under the charge of a strong escort and I think will reach you — but I feel little encouragement to write now as it is very probable it will only be labor thrown away. . . .

*June 9.* I have been rather unwell for a week or two and yesterday while on review was taken suddenly sick and compelled to leave the parade. I have a regular intermittent fever. Today is my well day and I am to take a large dose of quinine tonight, which Dr. Satterlee thinks will cure me. How my head ached all last night! . . . Merrill whom I saw on the eighth is sick — looks like death and is wasted to a very skeleton — though he has no well defined disease. We hear that reënforcements are expected and General Scott says he will eat his Fourth of July dinner in Mexico. The reports from the city are very contradictory, and so far as the public are concerned are not to be relied upon. General Scott may have reliable information though I doubt it.

*June 11.* Last night when I went to bed I took twenty grains of quinine and went to sleep hoping that I should escape any more fever, but long before morning I waked half crazy, my teeth chattering, with a most tremendous ague followed by a fever and a headache that made all crack again. . . . My fever has now subsided and I feel tolerably well again though weak. In the midst of my paroxysm our chaplain called upon me and gave me a lecture from the text: "Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth." . . . You ask me in one of your letters whether my statement of the number killed at Vera Cruz or the newspaper account, "sixty-five," is correct. The sixty-five includes all the wounded, many of the wounds being mere scratches. It is now said that twelve were killed, and I had put down the number ten. . . .

*June 17.* My birthday — I am forty years old. . . . An American can scarcely appreciate the glorious freedom and blessings of his native land unless he has been banished as I have for months where everything is stamped by ignorance, vice, and misery. . . .

*June 20.* On General Court Martial for several days past. Feel well, though still very weak. We hear from all quarters that the Mexicans, more than twenty thousand strong, are prepared to oppose our march to the Capital. We must have at least one tremendous battle. Welcome the danger, welcome the toil, welcome the fierce conflict and the bloody field, if it will but close the war.



*June 21.* How sad and dreary the hours pass! All day upon a tedious court and nothing to interest us after the adjournment. The thousand lying rumors which are constantly circulated with regard to the enemy have ceased to excite the slightest attention. . . . One thing is certain, — there will in future be no more comfort in army life. Peace cannot bring back to us those pleasant western stations — they are lost to us forever. On our widely extended southern and western frontier will be many isolated posts — far, far from civilization — there it is to be feared our days will be passed in dreary banishment. . . .

*June 23.* As yet we have no certain news from the column advancing under General Cadwalader, but the Mexican rumors state that he has had a battle at La Hoya, in which the enemy's loss was two hundred and eighty in killed, wounded, and prisoners, and ours thirty. This is about the usual proportion — but I doubt the whole story. Lying is so universal here that I am almost afraid I shall fall into the habit myself. The Seventh Infantry moved yesterday into quarters near us, so I shall see my brother every day. . . .

*June 24.* Nothing new. Waiting for reënforcements. It is rumored that some secret negotiations are quietly going on. *Nous verrons.* We hear that General Pillow is at Vera Cruz — but have not learned

the number of his troops. The report that agents are here negotiating with Mr. Trist has gained general credence. I have no doubt of it, but do not expect a favorable result. The Mexican Congress is soon to meet and all depends upon the spirit which animates its members.

*June 29.* Yesterday after coming from parade in the morning had a return of the ague and fever and passed a wretched day. My fever subsided towards evening, but by eleven o'clock I had another chill and passed a horrible night. The fever did not leave me until this morning. Two paroxysms of ague and fever in eighteen hours is rather tough. There has been much sickness in the army here, thirteen hundred having been on the report at one time.

*July 6.* . . . Since my last writing the prospect of peace has much increased, the tone of the Mexican papers has altered in the last week — they have evidently endeavored to produce an impression on the public mind that peace is necessary, and as they are entirely controlled by those in authority it is evident that Santa Anna is trying to bring about a termination of the war. It matters not whether in this course of conduct he is swayed by the hope of getting hold of the "three million," or whether the fear of another defeat and the consequent loss of the Capital of the Aztecs weighs with him, certain it is that General Scott and Mr. Trist have received communications

on this subject from the Mexican authorities, either through a secret agent sent to the city or through Mr. Bankhead the English resident minister — perhaps by both channels. Moreover we know that three commissioners have been nominated to meet those who have authority to act for our government. Nothing, however, can be done but by the authority of the Supreme Congress which commences its sessions day after tomorrow. If the peace party headed by the great One-legged can influence this turbulent popular assembly we may hope for favorable results. I am by no means sanguine in my hopes of a peace or even an armistice without much more bloodshed, and an entire change of policy in the conduct of the war. After every victory we are down upon our knees suing for peace, and as yet, although we have defeated their armies, the Mexican people have not felt the horrors of war, — but on the contrary have actually profited by it. Nothing but vague rumors are heard from the column advancing under General Pillow.

*July 7.* General Scott says that the chances for peace are three to one and many sanguine spirits here are rejoicing in the prospect. The advance of Pillow's column arrived this evening bringing the long, anxiously expected mail, which contained yours of the eleventh and twenty-fourth of May. . . . We in the Fifth are all much shocked by the death of Captain Whipple who breathed his last in the Castle of Perote.

He was deservedly the most popular officer in the regiment, and will be remembered by his companions with affectionate regret. . . . Colonel McIntosh arrived with the command yesterday; I was glad to see him. He appears in fine health. . . . Our information, though not of recent date, gives much cause to fear for the officers of our regiment in Detroit. Stevenson, who will be promoted by Whipple's death, it is said, is in wretched health, and cannot long survive. Norvell is considered in a hopeless state, and poor, nervous, irritable Whitall has entirely lost the use of one of his arms and is so miserable that he cannot leave the house. I sent you a letter by an express Mexican who was hired at a high price to carry it to Vera Cruz. I paid two dollars for my share, but am doubtful whether it ever reaches you — such uncertain chances are all we can have for the future. It is now the twenty-fourth of July, so now you see from mere hopelessness I have discontinued my journal. During some days we have all thought that a peace was about to be made — the news from Mexico and every deduction from common sense warranted the conclusion. It seems evident that if under existing circumstances, with their armies defeated, a great portion of their country in our possession and ten thousand of our troops within six days' march of their Capital, they refuse to negotiate, they will continue to do so until their entire country has been conquered,

which will take years, blood and treasure. Today all our fond anticipations are destroyed. Their Congress has dissolved without any definite action on the subject, and Santa Anna's proclamation for the defence of the city has reached us. Does the fool think he can keep ten thousand Yankees from entering it? True, many will be killed in the battle under the walls or in the streets, but Victory will never desert our ranks to consort with these filthy Mexicans, unless her taste is much depraved. I now despair of leaving this country for years. Bitter, most bitter is the conviction that such is to be my fate, and I can but wish that none were united to me and compelled to be miserable on my account. . . . Alas, the chance is I shall never see you again!

We are not to leave Puebla until after General Pierce arrives and where our course will be directed after the fall of the Capital, no one can tell. There is still much sickness in the army — my health is, however, perfectly reëstablished, though I am like most others here, extremely thin. Ruggles is quite sick. Have I ever mentioned that he is writing a history of the war? Won't it be a literary curiosity? Colonel McIntosh is before a Court of Inquiry on his conduct while commanding the escort and train from Vera Cruz to the National Bridge. The General has refused to give him the command of a brigade and as he has not assumed that of his regiment, he is just

at present *nobody*. Poor old man! he should never have been permitted to come here. . . .

*July 29.* We are in Puebla still and no day fixed for advance, though General Scott says he will show us the Capital by the eleventh of August. Day before yesterday a brigade under General P. Smith was ordered to the rear on the Orizaba road to meet and support General Pierce whom it is reported is threatened by four thousand of the enemy, and yesterday we learned that General Pierce is not on the Orizaba road, but has probably by this time reached Perote. Today we hear that General Smith has changed his direction to La Hoya at which strong defile they may possibly have a fight with the Mexicans. We cannot march until they arrive, and we are all anxious to see them and the mail they will bring. When on duty as field officer of the day, I have a wide circuit of guards and quarters to visit, located in every part of the city.

Several of the regiments are quartered in monasteries, of which there are at least a dozen in the city. They are much alike in appearance; very large stone buildings constructed in the most massive manner and entirely unlike anything in our country. I believe I am getting into a scrape by attempting a description of these strange, indescribable houses. To each one is attached a large church rich with statuary, paintings, gilding, and numerous votive offerings.

These churches all have domes and tall spires which contain from eight to thirty-two large bells. Imagine what a clatter there is when they are all ringing together, which is not unusual, particularly on any favorite Saint's day. The main building of the Monastery of San Francisco — they are all named after saints — is a succession of rectangles, two or three stories high, surrounding areas or paved courts in the centre of which plays a never-ceasing fountain and in which are planted fruit and flowering trees and shrubs. Around each area are broad balconies supported on heavy, stone arches, into which open the dormitories and other apartments. These dormitories or cells are usually about fifteen feet square, having but one window. Between these rooms in the interior of the building are long, narrow halls, badly lighted and ventilated, branching off to the different suites of cells in the various rectangles. On all these halls open rooms as they do in one of our large hotels; halls and rooms seem to be never ending and form a perfect labyrinth. The main galleries and apartments contain hundreds of oil paintings. Around one of the areas I counted forty-eight pictures, eight by twelve feet in size, with figures the size of life, all of a religious character. In some, gods, angels, men, and devils are strangely mingled. Among so many paintings there must be, of course, a number which are very indifferent, but others are well worthy of study

and will bear criticism. The kitchens, stables, and various offices are arranged in the basements. To the San Franciscan Monastery there is a large garden tastefully arranged, with a stone summer house in the centre surmounted by a Moorish dome. On the exterior of these buildings there are few or no windows, the massive walls and heavy gates completely cutting off the inmates from the world. It had a peculiar, old-world-like appearance to me when I first saw the monks (the lazy drones), in their long robes and deep hoods, noiselessly creeping through the dimly lighted galleries. I was officer of the day yesterday, and while on my rounds last night, a little after twelve, in passing through one of the back streets I was attracted by the sound of music accompanied by a strange kind of wailing which issued from the open door of rather an inferior house. I rode up to it and was much struck by the strange scene. The room was in a blaze of light from many candles. In its centre was a bier on which was extended the corpse of a girl apparently about seventeen, dressed in all the finery the family possessed, with flowers in her bosom, hair, and hands, and surrounded by gilded ornaments, probably borrowed from the churches. In one corner of the room was a group of old women, perfect hags, squatted round a furnace where a feast was cooking. They looked like so many witches round a cauldron. In the opposite corner was a display of liquors and drinking



cups, which the appearance of the inmates proved had not been suffered to stand idle. Immediately round the corpse were several couples dancing a fandango to the merry fiddle, while ever and anon the witches round the cauldron, with their shrill, cracked voices, howled a chant in the Indian, Tlasculan-language. The whole was evidently a strange commingling of the Romish superstitions and the ancient Indian funeral rites. . . .

*August 6.* . . . I hardly think you will ever see these pages, — or the hand which guides the pen may be cold in death before they reach you. . . . One of the most brilliant affairs of the war occurred at the village of San Juan, which is about five miles from the National road to the north of Ojo de Agua. General C. F. Smith sent Captain Ruff with a party of eighty-two mounted rifles on a scout to this place. On entering the village he was fired upon from the houses and a church where two hundred Infantry and one hundred guerillas were strongly posted. Ruff immediately dismounted his men and leaving twenty-four with the horses led the rest to the attack — breaking into the houses sword in hand. The Mexicans were soon routed and fled leaving forty-three dead, and it is said over fifty wounded. Their standard was captured and the public stores and arms in the place destroyed. Captain Ruff took no prisoners, and in this short but bloody fight lost but one man.

The order for the march to the Capital is published. The First division under Twiggs leaves on Saturday the eighth; the Second under Quitman the next day; ours, Worth's, on Monday the tenth, and the rest on Tuesday the eleventh. Altogether it is a feeble command for the work before it. Ten thousand troops to conquer a city containing near three hundred thousand inhabitants. We shall do it, but perhaps pay dearly for it. I think within ten days we shall have reached within striking distance, have made our dispositions, and commenced the attack. . . .

*August 8.* I have been all day preparing for the march which commences at daylight tomorrow. I have been too busy to think and I am glad it is so, as I almost despair when I reflect upon the destitute situation in which you will be left, with the three children dependent upon you, should I fall in the coming battle. I shall certainly be much exposed, being in the leading battalion to Worth's division, and we confidently expect to commence the attack. I hope, however, to escape unscathed for which, more for your sake than my own, I fervently pray.

General Scott with Uncle on his staff went forward this morning. The entire army is to unite at some point on the route, when in all probability our division will lead. I shall try every night to record the incidents of the march as they will interest you if they ever reach you. About twenty-five hundred sick are

to be left here. Colonel Childs remains as commanding officer and governor. Dr. Wright has today been attached to our battalion, so I am pretty sure if I am to have a leg cut off that it will be done scientifically.

. . .

*August 9.* At four this morning we arose and immediately after breakfast loaded the wagons and at six in the morning our battalion leading the Infantry of Worth's division marched out of Puebla. We followed a company of Dragoons and Duncan's light battery. Our route lay over the valley of Puebla to the right of Popocatepetl, our course northwest. The morning was clear and cold, as they always are in this climate, but as the sun approaches the zenith it becomes hot, though not oppressive as it is with you on a sultry summer day. We have marched all day between cultivated fields principally covered with corn which is standing in every stage of growth, from the young shoots a few inches high to fields of waving green with the ear nearly fit for harvest. The scenery on every side was beautiful in full view of the sublime mountains, their white, shining summits buried for thousands of feet in eternal snow and ice. On the left of the extensive plain dotted with white haciendas, each with its dome and tall spire, is the pyramid of Cholula and the extensive ruins of that large city. At half-past twelve we encamped at Aqua Freata. The camp is full of rumors in which, however, I place no

faith. In the first place it is reported that Santa Anna has been killed in consequence of his correspondence with General Scott; in the second place, that the Mexican troops are fighting among themselves in the city under various opposing generals, and that we shall enter the Capital without a battle. The opinions on the subject are various, but my voice is still for war. I believe we shall have a severe, a desperate fight. Towards night we could see the smoke of General Quitman's camp far in our advance.

*August 10.* Marched at seven, the country becoming richer and more thickly inhabited as we approached the mountains. All along the road, particularly at the watering places, the Mexican men and women were ready to receive us with various articles of marketing, such as fruits, vegetables, meats, etc. About twelve we arrived at the town of San Martin where we are quartered for the night. There are several churches, plazas, and fountains, and I should think from fifteen hundred to two thousand inhabitants. We had a strange and ridiculous scene this afternoon.

The main plaza was crowded with Mexican market people, our soldiers mingled among them, when some unaccountable fear produced an alarm, and they all ran in the most admirable confusion. The women with their hampers of truck and jars of milk and pulque tumbling over each other, scattering everything as

they scattered themselves in all directions. The drums beat and all got under arms. Everything is quiet now and no one knows what caused the stampede. *Adios.*

*August 11.* Marched from San Martin at half-past five. The morning was fine but it had rained during the night and the road was quite muddy. General Worth was informed that General Alvarez was a short distance on our left with fifteen thousand men, and some changes were consequently made in our order of march. A section of artillery was sent to the rear, the train closed up on the First Brigade, and the Second under Clarke immediately followed. Our road which was excellent passed through a rich and picturesque country rising rapidly towards the summit level between Vera Cruz and Mexico, occasionally pitching suddenly into a deep ravine or verdant valley. After marching ten miles we descended a steep hill to the bridge of Temelucan, a fine stone work over a rapid mountain stream. Here commenced the Pass of Rio Frio, an extremely strong defile which the Mexicans would have defended, if they were a brave people. At this place Quitman was fired upon yesterday and had one man killed. Just as the rain began at three o'clock, we reached the hacienda and tavern of Rio Frio, kept by a German and situated at the crossing of a mountain stream. We had marched nineteen miles and are now half way from Puebla to Mexico.

The rear guard did not come up until dark. No news from the advance. . . .

*August 12.* We marched from Rio Frio at six. The weather was very cold as it is always in this elevated region, though under a tropical sun. The broad, excellent road ran through a dense pine and cedar forest. In two hours we reached the summit of the mountain, ten thousand seven hundred feet above the sea. On our right and left were still loftier mountains towering high above us in the clouds. The change of vegetation from the tropical plants to those of the Arctic regions was distinctly perceptible as we advanced. The road plunged rapidly toward the plain and after descending a few miles the great valley of Mexico broke upon our view, a most glorious spectacle, which we beheld from the same point where Cortes first gazed upon it. Far to the right scarcely perceptible was the great city, and all over the vast plain spread out before us like a map were lakes, towns, haciendas, and large cultivated fields. We dipped into the valley by a winding road so steep as to be barely practicable for our wagons. At Cordova, just before we reached the plain, we found General Quitman and Shields with Tom Williams, General Scott's aid. From them we heard that General Scott was at Agotla six miles from El Peñon, a hill strongly fortified eight miles from the city, and that the engineers with a part of Twigg's division were reconnoitring that approach to the

city. Quitman's division were encamped at Buena Vista [see map], a hacienda where the road forks, the right branch going direct to the city by the right of Lake Chalco, and the left by a longer route round the lake. We were ordered to the left and before night reached the town of Chalco, a dirty place nearly surrounded by marsh and mud.

*August 13, Chalco.* We have not moved today. A reconnoissance has been going on around El Peñon which is found to be an exceedingly strong work, so that if any other approach to the city can be found, no assault will be made upon it. It is reported that the Mexicans have between thirty and forty thousand troops to oppose our weak ten thousand. Our task is truly desperate, and many of us will, of course, be sacrificed before we take the city. Pillow's division arrived this afternoon. Boats have been collected today to enable us to cross Lake Chalco, and thus avoid the strong positions of El Peñon and Guadalupe. About fifty scows have been found here which will carry forty men each and it is thought as many more are at Agotla.

*August 14.* Means have been discovered to turn El Peñon by land. A simultaneous attack is to be made by Worth's and Twigg's divisions on a place called Mexicalingo where it is supposed there are seventeen guns. In a reconnoissance yesterday, Lieutenant Schuyler Hamilton, Aid to General Scott, and

grandson of Alexander Hamilton, was desperately wounded by a lance. He was brought in this evening and it is thought he may recover.

*August 15.* It has been decided to abandon entirely the route by El Peñon and advance by the road to the left of Lakes Chalco and Xochimilco. We go to victory or death, — we can only be defeated by annihilation. Our spirits and courage are good, we have confidence in ourselves, and confidence in our generals. We left Chalco at two o'clock and proceeded round the head of the lake through vast corn fields. After marching five miles we struck the base of the mountain on the south of the valley, and after winding along its rugged side over a narrow, rough road for three miles, we bivouacked at a little village called Totalco. This morning we marched at seven continuing along the base of the mountain over the broken road with the valley and lakes on our right. We passed through several small villages on the marshy bank of Lake Xochamilco, which were completely embowered in olive orchards, the humble cottages built under the spreading branches. Far in our advance we could see San Augustine, Palapa, and other towns in the neighborhood of the city, and at one point a solitary spire of Mexico was visible. At eleven we were halted by an order brought from the rear by General Scott's Aide-de-Camp, who stated that a force of some five thousand of the enemy had shown themselves to the



left of Chalco. I do not like to criticize the acts of the general, but think this a bad move. Having decided upon one point of attack, it seems to me we should have pushed on without delay, giving Santa Anna no time to strengthen his defences at a place where he evidently has not expected us. We are now bivouacked at San Gregario in an olive grove. This afternoon some few of the enemy have been seen by our pickets and tomorrow I think, if we advance, they must meet us. We are about fifteen miles from the city and must come upon some of their advanced batteries in the next ten or twelve miles. One should put his house in order with the prospect of death before him. . . .

*August 17.* I am tired almost to death, but must say one word before I lie down. We marched this morning and immediately saw the enemy in our advance on the hills. Our battalion was sent forward to disperse them, and soon received their fire, — we, however, rushed upon them and they fled. Our labor has been immense, climbing over precipices, through broken, craggy ground all day. We lost one poor fellow which was all the injury we received. After passing Xochimilco (pronounced Hokamilco) which we left on our right we saw a heavy force of infantry and cavalry on a point near the termination of the causeway which leads from that town to San Augustine. We, however, disappointed them by taking a crossroad when

they had made every preparation for receiving us the other way. We slowly approached San Augustine which the enemy abandoned. In our skirmishes a few Mexicans were shot and the Governor of Mexico, who was heading some troops it is said, was mortally wounded. We entered the beautiful town of San Augustine about four in the afternoon. Santa Anna had left it a few hours before telling the inhabitants he could do nothing for them now but should if we had given him twenty-four hours more. To prove his kind feelings towards them he took every ounce of bread in the town to feed his troops. We advance again tomorrow and shall meet more serious opposition which must increase every step to the city. "One leg" vows to defend the Capital to the last extremity. I picked up a curious proclamation signed by him, written yesterday, to induce our men to desert. I shall enclose it in this. I saw Uncle Edmund today — he must needs come to the advance to try to get shot !

. . .  
*August 18.* About nine we advanced from San Augustine on the direct road to Mexico via San Antonio. A squadron of Dragoons, supported by our battalion, moved forward with the engineers, Major Larkin Smith and Captain James L. Mason, to reconnoitre. The Dragoons in our front pushed forward rapidly and were a few hundred yards in advance of us when a heavy piece of artillery was discharged at

them. Captain Thornton was instantly killed and the guide wounded. This occurred at ten in the morning not more than three hundred yards from where I am now. All day an extensive reconnoissance has been going on. I only came in at sunset. The result of our observations shows that the enemy are strongly posted, that the ground to the right and left is impracticable to artillery or Dragoons. It is possible we may turn their position by their right flank, and carry their batteries in reverse, but it must be done by infantry alone and against great odds. I think we shall try it tomorrow and we may have a bloody day. I am becoming anxious for the desperate effort. We are fairly committed — Mexico must fall or we must all find a grave between this and the city. . . .

TACUBAYA,  
August 22, 1847.

I hardly know how to commence a description of the events of the last three days. My brain is whirling from the long continued excitement and my body sore with bruises and fatigue — but I will try to get into my usual humdrum style and record things as they happened. On the nineteenth we still lay near San Antonio. In the morning a force composed of Twigg's and Pillow's divisions was ordered far to the right on the San Angel road. Quitman held San Augustine and we kept the enemy in check at San Antonio. Our

battalion strengthened by two companies from the Sixth, under Captain Hoffman, and two from the Eighth, under Brevet Major Montgomery, went far to the right reconnoitring. We passed over the same route as on the eighteenth but took no pains to conceal our march among the lava crags and ravines as before, but showed ourselves to the enemy wishing them to believe we still threatened their position at San Antonio. About twelve the enemy's guns at Contreras, or San Magdalene, opened fire upon Twigg's and Pillow's advancing column. They were about four miles from us over the rugged ground we occupied and were ascending the side of the mountain. The firing soon became tremendous — every flash and every peal was plainly perceptible to us, where we lay in reach of the guns of San Antonio. Soon the crash of small arms mingled with the incessant roar of artillery, the firing continuing for hours without our being able to perceive that our forces gained an inch. About five we, the light battalion, retired to our position on the San Antonio road. As the night closed in dark and rainy the firing ceased at Contreras and we in the camp of the first division were under intense excitement to know the result of the battle. Our wagons were packed and we all stood in the muddy road without fires or food, miserably fatigued and uncomfortable, but intensely anxious to hear from the battle. Most of us finally settled down in the

mud and rain, convinced that as we heard nothing we were not defeated. I was too anxious about my brother and companions to sleep. It was midnight before we heard. I then learned that the firing was mostly from the enemy — that our operations were entirely for position — that two officers, Captain Hanson of the Seventh and Lieutenant J. P. Johnston, second artillery, had been killed and our old friend Callender badly wounded in both legs, — he commanded a battery of mountain howitzers, — that the ground was broken, utterly impracticable for cavalry or field artillery, and that at daybreak the enemy's fortifications were to be assaulted by our infantry. Early on the morning of the twentieth, the attack was made and the works carried at the point of the bayonet, scarcely a gun being fired. We took fifteen hundred prisoners and twenty-two pieces of artillery among which were the guns captured by Santa Anna at Buena Vista. As soon as the result was known to General Worth, the Second Brigade of his division with our battalion were put in motion to endeavor to turn the position at San Antonio. For two hours we ran over the rocks moving by a flank, the enemy in a heavy column marching parallel to us and almost in gun shot, until the head of the Fifth Infantry pierced their line and the fight began at a quarter before twelve. It will be entirely impossible for me to give any lucid description of this terrible battle. It ex-

tended over a large space and I could see but little of it, being too hotly engaged to notice much beyond the sphere of my own duties. The point where our troops pierced the retreating column of the enemy was on the road from San Antonio to Mexico near a hacienda where the left of their line of defences terminated. Our battalion when the firing began must have been near a half mile to the rear. The "double quick" was sounded and the whole advanced at a run. We soon reached the road and turned in hot pursuit. This road is a broad, stone causeway with corn fields and pastures on each side of it, divided by broad ditches filled with water from three to six feet deep, — the corn tall and very thick. It was soon seen as we rushed along the road that the enemy were only retreating to a fortified position which constituted their second line of defences at Churubusco. You will hear this called San Pablo and by another name which I cannot recall.

Along the road to this point I had seen no wounded or dead American, though on either hand and in the road were many dead Mexicans. I saw one colonel lying in the ditch shot through the heart. We had advanced on the road less than a mile when we were ordered into the fields to assault the right of the enemy's position, — I am speaking of our battalion. We soon formed line in an open field behind the thick corn in our advance. The escopet balls were

whistling over our heads, though at long range, and occasionally a cannon ball sang through the corn as it tore its path along in our front.

At this time the battle was fiercely contested on our left and front, but I did not, and do not now know what regiments were engaged. It must have been about half-past twelve. Immediately in front of us, at perhaps five hundred yards, the roll of the Mexican fire exceeded anything I have ever heard. The din was most horrible, the roar of cannon and musketry, the screams of the wounded, the awful cry of terrified horses and mules, and the yells of the fierce combatants all combined in a sound as hellish as can be conceived. We had not from our battalion as yet fired a gun, but now rapidly advanced, all apparently eager to bring the contest to a hand to hand combat in which we knew our superiority.

We could not tell what was before us — whether the enemy were in regular forts, behind breast-works, or delivering their fire from the cover afforded by the hedges and ditches which bordered the road and fields, — all was hidden by the tall corn.

We soon came out of it into a crossroad near some small houses, where we were exposed to a dreadful cross fire, which could scarcely be resisted. Many had fallen and the battalion was much scattered and broken. The grape round shot and musketry were sweeping over the ground in a storm which strewed

it with the dead and dying. I found it extremely difficult to make the men stand or form, but finally succeeded with my own company which was at once ordered to charge under my brave Lieutenant Farrelly. I was occupied reorganizing the three other companies, the colonel and many of the officers and men not appearing when arose the most fearful time of the battle. My men were just formed and I had ordered the charge which I was about to lead, when the dreadful cry came from the left and rear that we were *repulsed*. A rush of men and officers in a panic followed, running over and again breaking my little command. I, however, succeeded in disentangling them from the mass, composed of a great portion of the Eighth, Sixth, and Fifth Infantry, with some artillery. I shouted that we were *not* repulsed — to charge — and the day would be ours. Our colonel, C. F. Smith, now joined us, and the cry throughout was: "Forward!"

Up to this time we were not aware that the other divisions of the army were engaged, but we now learned that Twiggs and others were pressing them on the left and had been fighting them an hour or more. Before this we had discovered we were under the fire of two forts, one a bastion front *tête du pont* flanking, and being flanked by a larger work, built round an extensive convent. Now as the whole army shouted and rushed to the assault, the enemy gave



way, retreating as best they could to Mexico. They were pursued by all, hundreds being shot down in the retreat, our Dragoons charging after them to the guns at the gate of the city, where they were stayed by a tremendous discharge from the battery covering the entrance. Three officers, Captains Kearney and McReynolds and Lieutenant Graham, were here wounded, and Major Mills of the Fifteenth Infantry killed.

As soon as the battle terminated and the pursuit ceased, I went back, tired and sore as I was, to collect the dead and dying of our battalion and did not return until night. The field presented an awful spectacle — the dead and the wounded were thickly sprinkled over the ground — the mangled bodies of the artillery horses and mules actually blocking up the road and filling the ditches. How sickening was the sight after all the excitement of the contest was past! In my own company I found two dead and fifteen wounded. Lieutenant Farrelly received two shots, one in the breast and one in the arm. In the battalion there was in the aggregate fifty killed and wounded out of about two hundred and twenty engaged; in our entire division, three hundred and thirty-six; in the whole army, one thousand fifty-two. Seventy-four officers were killed and wounded, thirteen killed on the field. Our own particular friends are unhurt. I thank God for my escape which I now think

wonderful. I was in the thickest of the fight for more than an hour, and my feet by grape and cannon were twice knocked from under me.

The loss of the enemy must be immense. We have taken between two and three thousand prisoners, seven generals, and thirty-seven large guns. Their officers say, in killed, missing, and captured, they have lost over five thousand. They acknowledge that they had twenty, some say thirty thousand, in the fight. It was a wonderful victory and undoubtedly the greatest battle our country has ever fought, and I hope will bring peace. At all events, the great city is at our mercy, and we could enter it at any hour.

On the morning of the twenty-first I was ordered to take charge of some funeral parties collecting and burying the dead. This was a sad, a solemn service — though in our haste we performed no burial rites — paid no honors — but laid our dead in the earth in the bloody garments in which they died, most of them on the spot where they fell. Indeed many were so torn and mangled by the shot it was entirely impossible to move them. In searching the ground for bodies I gained a very accurate knowledge of the field or I could not have made the rude sketch above. [He refers to a little map of the field which he had drawn.] In it I pretend to no accuracy except so far as the various points lie with regard to each other. At the convent, around which one fortification is constructed, I saw

the Mexican prisoners and some fifty of our deserters who were taken in arms against us. The Mexican position was exceedingly strong and I can hardly understand how we carried it when I reflect that we had only between six and seven thousand engaged and they, at the least, estimate twenty thousand.

I returned to camp about twelve and found everything in preparation for a march as we all supposed to attack the city — but we moved off to the left to Tacubaya, where we found General Scott's headquarters, and learned that a flag of truce had been received from Santa Anna preparatory to negotiations for peace, and that we were not to enter the city. There was much muttering and grumbling throughout the army when it was known that these were to be the fruits of all our fatigue and fighting. I supped with Uncle Edmund and slept in a monk's cell in an old convent.

On the twenty-third and twenty-fourth of August negotiations were going on, and finally on the twenty-fifth an armistice was concluded for the purpose of making a peace. By the armistice we are excluded from the city and either general can terminate it by giving forty-eight hours' notice. This I fear may be the result, though perhaps Santa Anna may be compelled to make a peace to save himself from his own countrymen who will certainly kill him if deserted by his troops, as he surely will be if we fight again. The

money which he will receive from us may enable him to declare himself dictator and maintain a force with which he can defy all the Pronunciamentos in Mexico.

My notes have been written in detached portions, having been constantly interrupted by duty and a thousand annoyances, and I am fully aware that the preceding pages, although they may interest you, are an exceedingly lame and imperfect account of our operations. It is now the twenty-eighth of August and I have as yet seen none of the official reports; however, for *your* gratification I can tell you that I am favorably mentioned in the report, as Uncle Edmund tells me, and that I have been spoken of in high terms at headquarters. He says I will now get the brevet which I earned long ago. This, of course, is for you alone. I have not much hope of so desirable a result as I have no political influence to aid me and would not resort to it if I had. My glorious brother, I learn, has a paragraph especially dedicated to his praise in Plympton's report. He fully deserves anything complimentary which can be said of him.

Commissioners were appointed on the twenty-sixth by Santa Anna, who met Mr. N. P. Trist on the evening of the twenty-seventh. Mr. Trist was accompanied by Major A. Van Buren whom, I presume, acted as his secretary. I am afraid Trist "has more cloth cut out than he can make up in his shop," but sincerely hope he may effect a treaty. At headquarters

the utmost confidence is felt as to the result. They met last evening when the basis of the proposed treaty was submitted by Mr. Trist. They have met again today at some village a few miles from here. May God prosper and speed their consultations!

On the twenty-sixth our wagons were sent to the city for supplies, — money, subsistence, etc. — but were sent back from the gate, though the armistice declares there shall be no obstruction to our procuring supplies from the Capital. General Scott, of course, was much astonished and immediately ordered a termination to the truce, — but an apology came from Santa Anna almost before the words had passed his lips. Yesterday they went again, conducted by a quarter-master in citizen's dress; and escorted by Mexican lancers, they reached the main plaza without any annoyance, — but in moving from that place to some point beyond, they were attacked by the mob, stones and sticks being used. Several of the teamsters were wounded and the whole train driven from the city in double-quick time. Two wagons were lost in spite of the Mexican officers and soldiers who, it is said, did all in their power to protect our men and wagons — even it is said killing some of the mob. Many of the Mexican women were engaged in this row which was undoubtedly an attempt at a revolution, the cry being heard throughout the crowd: "Death to Santa Anna! Death to the Yankees!" This

ridiculous affair has again come near to terminate the negotiations, but I am told it is now adjusted and whatever we require is to be sent from the city to us.

We are in a strange situation — a conquering army on a hill overlooking an enemy's Capital, which is perfectly at our mercy, yet not permitted to enter it, and compelled to submit to all manner of insults from its corrupt inhabitants. I am much afraid that peace cannot be made, but this satisfaction remains to us, that the world must see that, though always victorious, we have ever extended the olive branch, always ready to sheathe the sword.

I passed an exceedingly interesting hour this morning with Colonel Hitchcock in listening to the translations of many letters from a large mail coming from the Capital, which was captured on the twenty-second. They were from generals, aids, husbands, wives, sweet-hearts, indeed, all classes. Many of them were written in a most beautiful style, all in a tone of utter heart-broken despondency. Several stated that the troops opposed to us amounted to thirty-two thousand, that they were utterly routed and dispirited, and no longer able to oppose us. Some of them are admirable and accurate descriptions of the battles, evidently written by accomplished soldiers who well understand the subject. I recollect an expression in one written by an officer of high rank. Speaking of the assault at Contreras, he says: "When the rain and darkness

came on at night I supposed the Americans would retire to sleep, but they were too astute to rest. In war the Yankees know no rest — no fear.” High compliments from an enemy. The letter is addressed to a Congressional deputy and calls upon him to come “to the funeral obsequies of his dishonored nation.” In another the writer says: “All is lost, God has forsaken us, the sentence of Belshazzar is written upon our walls, ‘Mene, Mene tekel upharsin.’” They will all be published if Colonel Hitchcock ever succeeds in getting them to the United States. . . .

This town, Tacubaya, is finely situated on the side and crest of a rugged hill, exceedingly irregular. At the highest point is a fine palace, now General Scott’s headquarters. The whole town is an incongruous mixture of palaces, luxurious gardens, ruins, hovels, and squalid poverty. The most exquisitely beautiful spot I have ever visited is a small garden of a wealthy merchant here. In its centre is a fountain throwing up its crystal jet high in the air, overhung by a magnificent cedar far surpassing any tree of the kind I have ever seen, at least three feet in diameter at the base, and its straight, smooth shaft in all the symmetry of an architectural column rising full forty feet without a limb. All round are the fruits, flowers, and vines of every clime growing luxuriantly in this eternal spring. At the extremity of the centre walk is a huge white ash full equal to the green monarch in

the middle of this paradise. Growing side by side, their branches commingling, are apples, pears, quinces, figs, oranges, pomegranates, peaches, grapes, and other fruits, all growing in the space of half an acre of ground, — all bearing — all in the most flourishing health. Beneath, bordering some of the winding walks, are beds of strawberries, the ripe fruit looking most tempting.

To the north, less than a mile from Tacubaya, lies Chapultepec, anciently the country residence of the Montezumas — the cannon and troops on the walls plainly visible, while the palace around which the fortifications are built appears across the deep valley between us, as if a leap would place us in its marble halls. To the northeast, apparently at but a little greater distance, lies amid its lakes and marshes the boasted city of the Aztecs, its spires and domes, its walls and aqueducts, all plainly visible. Look round over the rich, broad valley of Mexico. What a glorious scene lies before us! I am now standing in the lofty belfry of this old Franciscan Monastery. In the centre of the valley is the reedy lake of Chalco, its waters shining through the long lines of the arbor vitae, ash, cypress, and other trees which border the broad causeways that cross its bosom in various directions, while around it and around us rise on every side the white haciendas of the wealthy owners of the soil, looking like lordly castles — and all appears fair,



rich, happy, and most beautiful. Encircling all this rise the lofty mountains, a frame to this most glorious picture, the shining summit of old Popocatepetl forming the gilded ball at the top! How deceitful! " 'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view." Let us descend and examine more closely. Alas, how decay and neglect are stamped on everything around! The fields abandoned and uncultivated; the stone walls broken and scattered; the hedges torn, untrimmed, and in many places uprooted and gone for rods; the long aqueducts and vast stone reservoirs broken and dry, or filled with green, slimy, aquatic plants and all manner of reptiles; while the white, aristocratic-looking haciendas are in ruins and uninhabited, the monuments of a more prosperous age. Sad evidences that with the monarchy departed the glory, wealth, and happiness of this fair domain.

*September 1.* We are remaining quietly in our position here at Tacubaya, awaiting the result of the negotiations. Ex-President Herrera is the chief of the Mexican Commission, and none of the members are Santa Anna's political friends. This increases the chance of a favorable result, as it takes from Santa Anna some of the responsibility, compelling the friends of these commissioners to unite with them in whatever course they may pursue. At headquarters the utmost confidence is felt that a peace will be made, and it surely will be if the Mexican president has suf-

ficient power to effect it. The only fear is that he may not be able to overcome all the factions which are and will be opposed to him. His sincerity is sufficiently demonstrated by the fact that he has sent us, and is still sending us, all the supplies we require from the city. Over five hundred thousand dollars has already been received and more is still to come.

We have a rumor that a mail has arrived at Puebla, if so, I shall soon receive some of your delightful letters, shall again hear from my children. I wish I could be certain you will hear from me, — but we are tolerably confident the last letters we sent from Puebla were carried to Santa Anna instead of to Vera Cruz.

*September 2.* Everything remains *in statu quo* today. The commissioners are in session and so far as can be ascertained from the remarks of Mr. Trist and Major Van Buren last evening, after they had adjourned, everything is progressing favorably. We have many rumors from the Capital, — but they are so contradictory and sometimes so absurd that I scarcely listen to them. We are, however, certain that Santa Anna has collected from his scattered forces a large army and it is said has now over twenty thousand under arms in the city, keeping up a show of preparation for the war, which, however, gives us not the least uneasiness as we are confident of our ability to whip them at any time. Moreover, there will be no necessity of an assault as they will never suffer the Capital to be bombarded.

I have said little of the Fifth or of any other regiment in the fight as I have confined my statements to such occurrences as came under my immediate observation. Colonel Clarke was wounded slightly in the early part of the action, McIntosh<sup>1</sup> succeeding to the command of the brigade and Martin Scott<sup>2</sup> to that of the regiment. It was much broken and I am told never acted in a body after Scott took the command. There seems to be much ill feeling existing — hardly a shadow of harmony left in the regiment. Ruggles claims much glory for his conduct and has made a report, which has gone to headquarters, in which he claims to have captured the first gun taken at Churubusco. It is said, and I believe with truth, that the cannon was a thirty-two-pounder, broken down, spiked, and abandoned in the road by the enemy, that it was not fired and had been passed by many of our troops before Ruggles came up to it! Such is glory! McPhail, who is Martin Scott's toady, is highly spoken of by him, but the prevailing opinion in the regiment is that he *behaved badly*. In truth, there is much discord, all are quarreling about the honors, and I *am* thankful that I am detached from the regiment and have nothing to do with their envious misunderstandings. I keep my own counsel and listen to all their complaints without

<sup>1</sup> Colonel McIntosh killed at Molino del Rey, September 8, 1847.

<sup>2</sup> Colonel Martin Scott killed at Molino del Rey.

comment. As far as I am myself concerned I have nothing to say. If justice is not done me in the official reports, I shall suffer in silence. I cannot blow my own trumpet. I judge from the remarks of all who speak to me on the subject that I shall not be overlooked. It is said the generals, too, utterly disagree in their reports, each claiming for their own commands the deeds done by other troops. How General Scott can sift the truth from the whole mass of discrepancies I cannot conceive, indeed, I am induced to believe from what I have already heard that much injustice will be done by his report. Hints of its contents are constantly leaking out. With regard to one person there is no disagreement; all unite in the opinion that our chaplain, McCarty, deserves a wreath. He was under fire during the battle, pressing forward among the combatants, encouraging and exhorting all to deeds of gallantry, and it has been proposed that he be made a Brevet Bishop!

I do not yet see any prospect of a safe mail to Vera Cruz, and I shall not send this until I am perfectly satisfied that it will not be captured, for rude as these memoranda are, they will interest you, and be a valuable reference for me in the future. Lieutenant Dent, on my application, has been today temporarily assigned to my company, and will have the military command of it for the present. Sergeants Updegraff and Archer have both been recommended for com-

missions. Updegraff will make a good officer and is a gentleman. The other I did not recommend, though he is a brave, honest man. Little Barney is quite sick, so I lose my cook, laundress, and servant, my "Caleb Quotem." I do not know what I shall do without him. By the bye, he desires that his respects be presented to "my lady," with assurances that there is plenty of "mustard" and that he will take care of the "captain." The market here is bad and everything horribly dear. . . . It has cost me one dollar a day for provisions since my arrival. We hear that everything is quite cheap in the city but the market men are all in a combination to cheat the Yankees, and our generals do not establish any market tariff as we all think they ought so we are compelled to submit or starve.

*September 7.* Since the second, until yesterday, nothing occurred worthy of note, though I thought there were abundant signs that Santa Anna was only "humbugging" us, indeed, as my journal shows, I have thought from the beginning that it was only a scheme on his part to keep us out of the city and to gain time. It truly seemed wonderful to me that in the truce the immediate surrender of Chapultepec, Mexicalingo, and El Peñon was not demanded — it could not have been refused; the city itself must at once have given up; they could not for some days after the battle of the twentieth have made any resistance.

On the fifth it began to be rumored that the proffers made by Mr. Trist were rejected and the treaty violated; in fact, a week before that time I reported in writing to General Scott, as I thought on sufficient evidence, that the enemy were violating the armistice by erecting and increasing their fortifications. But the general pronounced my informant, who was a resident of the city, a "*liar*." On the evening of the sixth, however, General Scott declared the truce terminated in consequence of the frequent violations of its articles by Santa Anna. We are now no more advanced than we were previous to the battle of the twentieth last. In the sixteen days during which he has been flattering us with the hopes of peace he has been actively collecting his scattered forces, and with all his energies preparing to renew the combat. He has now twenty-two thousand men under arms and the Capital placed in such a state of defence that the enemy loudly boasts we cannot take it. Fatal credulity! How awful are its consequences to us! By it, the fruits of our glorious and incomparable victory are entirely thrown away. In the sixteen days our provisions and forage have been almost entirely exhausted; eight hundred of our men are sick, which added to about the same number put *hors de combat* by death and wounds leaves us nearly two thousand weaker than we were on the morning of the twentieth ultimo, and now, alas, we have all our fighting to do over again.

In my opinion a much bloodier battle is to be fought than any which have preceded it. When will our rulers learn wisdom! How many times must they be gulled and deceived before they will learn to treat all Mexican promises with scorn! This morning a heavy column of the enemy were seen marching from the city by Chapultepec. Their right was established at a large building, said to be a foundry, something more than a mile from Chapultepec, and their left resting on that strong fortification. Their line is along an aqueduct and a deep ditch covered by bushes and trees bordering an extensive pasture and grain field — an extremely strong position.

I have just learned that the plan of attack is arranged. A forlorn hope of five hundred men commanded by Major G. Wright is to carry the foundry and blow it up. At the same time an attack from our artillery, the rest of the first division and Cadwalader's Brigade is to be made upon their line and Chapultepec, our battalion forming the *reserve*. This operation is to commence at three in the morning. Tomorrow will be a day of slaughter. I firmly trust and pray that victory may crown our efforts though the odds are immense.

I am thankful that you do not know the peril we are in. Good night.

*The writer fell mortally wounded early the next morning.*

In this the hardest contested battle of the whole war the aggregate of the American troops upon the field, before Pillow's arrival at San Borja, was but 3,447. That this small force attacked and drove the enemy, at least 10,000 strong (exclusive of Alvarez's forces), from his formidable positions and entrenchments, captured four pieces of artillery and near eight hundred prisoners, and, principally by the use of the musket, without material assistance from heavy artillery is most astonishing. In view of it, it cannot be denied that as a feat of arms the battle of Molino del Rey was one of the most brilliant of a war full of brilliant achievements. *The War with Mexico*, Vol. II, pp. 284-285, by R. S. Ripley.



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PRINTED AT  
THE HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
CAMBRIDGE, MASS., U. S. A.













